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TAMBOUR.

BY THOMAS H. RADDALL.

IT was one of those small railway smoking-compartment gatherings where, between the complacent dollar-dreaming man with the cigar (his ticket stuck in the band of his derby hat where the conductor can get it without disturbing his reveries) and the lumberjack with the corn-cob pipe full of Pictou twist, whom you scarcely can see for smoke, there sits a man filling a charred and cherished briar from a rather expensive pouch and regarding you with a mildly speculative eye. In this case it was a blue eye, with a pale clean-shaven indoor face, rather thin about the cheeks, with a pointed chin and a good straight nose. He wore blue serge of a conservative business cut, and pearl-grey spats and well-polished shoes. The manager of a branch bank in a country town of some size, or perhaps a life insurance agent—the sage middle-aged sort who have risen above the sordid twenty-pay-life affairs of the madding crowd and sell nothing but group policies to prosperous industrial firms. He was smiling a little, and he said, "You've been a wireless operator, haven't you?" I put down the newspaper at once.

"How did you know?" I said. He did not look like Sherlock Holmes.

"Quite easy," he said. "You've sat there ten minutes reading the news from Ottawa and tapping morse on the seat with your right hand."

"Oh!"

"It was Continental code—I caught the word Thursday, a good test word—so I knew you weren't a railway man or any sort of land-line operator."

"But cable operators use Continental," I reminded him.

"Cable men," he explained gently, "use a double key. If you'd been a cable man you'd have made dots with your thumb, and dashes with the first two fingers together, with a little sidewise roll of your hand."

"Ah," I admitted. "Then you're an operator yourself?"

"Once upon a time. Funny how it burns the code into your brain, isn't it? Like the brand of Cain. You can't shake it off. For the rest of your life you think in dots and dashes, and whenever your mind's occupied you dither away with your fingers all sorts of stuff that has nothing to do with the problem of the moment. Today, for instance, is Saturday, and that's a morning paper you have in your hand."

"But," I pointed out, rather nettled—I did not like my rôle as the fatuous Watson—"this news despatch refers to something that happened on Thursday."

He shrugged. It was a trivial point. We compared notes. He was one of the coast operators who wangled transfers to the army during the war, and went overseas in khaki. He knew nothing of that amazing collection of drifters, armed yachts, and curiosities which functioned as the East Coast Patrol during the war. For his benefit I recited some of the more rollicking parts of "Rhymes of the R.C.N.V.R.," and he, out of his pre-war memories, said something rather clever about our infant navy having perished at birth—"poor solitary *Rainbow* in eclipse on the shores of the Pacific, and *Niobe* aground on her own beef-bones in Halifax Harbour, weeping for her children like Niobe of old."

He had returned to the coast wireless after his discharge from the army, and saved his pay—in some lonely hole, I fancied—until '22 or '23, when broadcasting was beginning to catch the public fancy. He had put aside his 'phones and brass key then, and set up a little radio shop in Montreal, and his fortune had risen with the radio tide. I gathered that he now had a large manufacturing business.

In some way the conversation worked round to the curious things one heard sometimes in the heavy old-fashioned clamped head-phones, and he asked me, "What d'you think was the most dramatic message ever sent on the air?"

"That takes in a lot of territory," I murmured.

"I don't mean broadcasting," he said quickly. "I mean sent out by a common ordinary brass-pounder like you or me."

"Well," I said slowly, "there's Peary's message about the North Pole. I've heard old-timers on the Labrador stations describe how it came trickling down the coast from one little plain-aerial spark to another. Then there's the *Titanic*, and Jack Philips pounding out the new distress call—SOS—and the old one—CQD—just to make sure. And there's that dramatic '*Emden* here' the operator at Cocos snapped out just before the German landing party got in and broke up the instruments. Oh, a thousand things. But most dramatic for me, I think, was that cryptic '*Ouvrez les portes. Ouvrez les portes*' which Eiffel Tower—good old FL—tapped out just after a bunch of the usual mine warnings on 11th November 1918. Coming in the clear like that (after living, eating, and breathing codes and ciphers), with its queer suggestion of a besieged world able to walk forth into God's sunshine again, it stuck in my mind. I can shut my eyes on twenty years and hear that small thin spark again—remember how the Frenchmen made an F?—with a funny little extra space between the first two dots; it always sounded like E-R."

But I could see that my companion had no interest in my notions of wireless drama. He had thrown out a cue and waited to follow it up. There was something about the way he lit his pipe—with the quick hard sucks of a man who has something important to say. So I leaned back and waited. The lumberjack emerged from his cloud, tapped a large and fuming dottle into the brass cuspidor, striking the thing like a gong, and withdrew. The derby hat, disturbed by the sound, dropped the butt of his cigar into the cuspidor and went back to the main car also. We had the worn black upholstery, the brass accessories, and the reek of a thousand bygone smokes to ourselves.

"Did you ever," I was asked, "hear about the affair at Tambour Island?"

I remembered Tambour as one of the loneliest stations on the long and lonely coast. It was dismantled years ago; like many another inaccessible post, its traffic taken over by a higher-powered—and much more convenient—station on the mainland.

"Tambour?" I said. "The station burned shortly after the war. There was some sort of tale about it. I was in England at the time, under orders for North Russia. The boys had a hard time, didn't they? I forget, really."

"It was burned down in March 1919," he said. "It was an old station, built in 1904, with the usual gasolene horizontal engine to drive the dynamo, and one of those growling non-synchronous sparks that sounded like a voice from the dead. 'Bib' Tucker was the operator in charge, and the others were Frenchie Deveaux, Phil Killigrew, and 'Carlie' Carleton—all famous old-timers. You must have known them on the air."

"Who didn't?" I said. It was the custom of war and post-war operators to refer to the pre-war vintage as old-timers, though most of them were quite young. Most ships on the coast had traffic with Tambour at some time or other, and it was a matter of professional pride to recognise the island operator's style and slip in a complimentary 'GM'—good morning—'GN'—good night—'Bib' or 'Dev' or 'CC' or 'Phil,' whichever it was; for a man's hand on a telegraph key is as good as television when you know your business.

He was a little impatient at the interruption. "Tucker took charge of the station when it was built. There was a lighthouse on Tambour, kept by a Newfoundland man named Boyle, with his wife and daughter. They'd been on the island for years. The daughter was born there, in fact, and when Tucker married her in 1905 or '06 she was in the late twenties, no beauty, a tall, gaunt, secretive woman who'd never been off Tambour in her life, and regarded 'Bib' as some sort of god dropped from the sky. 'Bib' Tucker was a big good-looking fellow who might have had his choice ashore, but he knew no right-minded lovely would leave the world to live on Tambour, and he'd made up his mind to stay no less than twenty years, letting his pay accumulate, and then retire to a farm in New Brunswick. It is not good that man should live alone—not twenty years—so Tucker and Sara Boyle went aboard the supply steamer and got the captain to marry them. The wireless station was the usual thing in those times, a long grey bungalow of clapboards, with the engine-room at one end, the instrument-room at the other—as far from the noise as possible—and a big kitchen between, with three rooms opening off it. The Tuckers had the west bedroom; Carleton had the next—he was second operator, by seniority of course, there was no difference in the pay; and the others had a double-deck cot in the third room. Mrs Tucker did the cooking and they all lived together as one family.

"Twice a year, in spring and fall, a steamer touched there with supplies and mail, and there was an unofficial agreement that the operators—excepting Tucker, of course—should be relieved and transferred to a more congenial post after one year's service at Tambour. And so, every year, operators came and went, each new crew bringing new yarns, new gramophone records, new magazines, new hobbies, an annual rejuvenation of the Tambour life. And one day Mrs Tucker walked quietly over to the lighthouse and there, under her mother's hands, in the little bedroom where she herself had been born, she gave birth to Tucker's son. Nothing unusual, after all. It's done all the time in the outposts.

"Bobby Tucker was four when the war broke out. It was an exciting time. All up and down the coast bored wireless operators were resigning their posts—deserting if necessary—to join the army or the navy. The immediate result was a chronic shortage of operators. No reliefs could be made. Deveaux, Carleton, and Killigrew found themselves marooned on Tambour apparently for the duration of the war. They were eager to get into the thick of it—who wasn't ? — though everybody agreed it couldn't last more than a year, and the new forces could scarcely be trained in that time. The relief they'd expected in November of '14 failed to appear, of course ; so they began to count the days to the spring of '15, when the next boat was due. Surely a relief crew would be available by that time !

"In late October of '14 old Boyle died very suddenly, and when the steamer came a few days later Mrs Boyle took the body ashore, all sealed up in a double coffin of pine plank, and went to live with her people in some little fishing village tucked away in the north coast of Newfoundland. Although she had a husband and son, Sara Tucker must have felt the pangs of loneliness then for the first time in her life. The new light-keeper, Hennessy, and his wife were Newfoundlanders too, middle-aged, quiet, and very reserved. They had nothing to talk about, really. They'd spent all their lives on places like Tambour. You can picture, perhaps, the aching monotony of the life those operators led. In normal times a man went on watch with a sense of release. The mere act of donning the 'phones took him out of the loneliness, especially at night, when the darkness in its mysterious way extended the listening range by three, four, or five times, and gave him a seat in the great whispering gallery of the world. Ships were exciting things, always crackling out something interesting ; you didn't get a *Titanic* drama every day, but there was a grist of collisions, fires, lost propellers, groundings and what not, and the passenger liners poured out messages like the smoke from their funnels, full of the stuff of life. You sat in a shabby chair somewhere on the edge of civilisation, beyond all sight or thought of the people who signed those messages, and you heard them, and weighed them, and you laughed, sneered, sympathised, condemned or praised —you know, as if you were a god in judgment. And in those free and easy days, when regulations were elastic or merely ignored, there was always a passing ship calling up for a chat, or some fellow you knew on one of the other coastal stations, and bits of professional gossip drifted up to you, link by link along the chain, from Montreal or Halifax or St John's.

All this ceased with the outbreak of war. For a time there was an enforced silence, and then the ether became a babel of codes and ciphers, and Tambour tapped out or copied for relay transmission an endless hodge-podge of figures and letters that had no meaning, no spark of interest, no savour for the group at the breakfast table, nothing. And when submarine warfare spread across the Atlantic, and convoys included even the rusty little tramps, and submarines were believed to work in pairs using radio-goniometers, compelling ship wireless to keep silent, and the mains from each ship's dynamo went to a locked switch in the captain's cabin to make the silence sure—then the air became an aching void, with an occasional swift crackle of ALLO, the 'attacked by submarine' signal, popping out of it to prove that your receiving gear was all right.

"But *you* know. It was strain, strain, strain. Your ears ached, and your mind howled like a bored wolf. Those exiles on Tambour picked up a little news in plain language on the long wave at night, U.S. Navy press from Arlington mostly, and, of course, every six months they got grub and mail and a few newspapers. Before the war benevolent people used to send barrels of magazines, books, games, and so on for distribution to the lighthouses and wireless stations scattered along the coast from Cape Sable to Cape Chidley, but the war, and the expeditionary force, diverted all that attention overseas. The men and women on Tambour found themselves forgotten of the world. The Hennessys, of course, had never known the world, nor Sara Tucker; and Tucker himself could think of nothing but the pay steadily accumulating in the Bank of Montreal, and the little farm outside Fredericton where he and Sara and Bobby would settle in far-away 1924. He wasn't a phenomenon, after all. The North is full of men with dreams like that. But for the three operators it was hell. If you can resign yourself to it, put yourself in a sort of waking trance, time flows by, five years or fifty. But when you're counting days, a year's a lifetime. They made a calendar on the wall inside the store shed and solemnly marked off each day, like the Crusoes they were. They began at one end of the little shed, and by the time that long-delayed relief came to them the calendar was all over the wall. I saw it afterwards, and it was pathetic, you know; all drawn off in bold three-inch squares, and the dates blotted out with a lumber crayon. In one place, at the foot of '16, they'd signed their names—

"B. CARLETON
A. DEVEAUX
P. KILLIGREW

Christmas 1916.

HOW LONG, O LORD, HOW LONG?

"In February of '17 something tragic happened. Young Bobby Tucker died. He'd always been sickly. It was pneumonia, I think. Nothing in the station medicine-chest nor Tucker's well-thumbed Family Doctor could save him. The thin soil of Tambour Island was frozen solid, like a part of the great rock itself. Tucker and Carlie Carleton made a coffin of pine boards, and the dead boy was placed in the store shed for three months while the ground thawed. Every day Mrs Tucker went out there and sat reading her Bible, an hour, two hours, wearing an old mackinaw coat and mittens, and a shawl over her head, like a figure of Death itself in the bleak frost of that gloomy place. Tucker used to go out and argue with her, persuade her to come back to the warmth of the kitchen. She said very little. In fact she went for weeks now with barely a word. And the time dragged on for those hopeful, hopeless men. They'd heard each other's yarns a thousand times, read the scanty papers and magazines to rags, worn out the gramophone, and played forty-five until they were sick of the sight of torn greasy cards. All through '17 and '18 they moved about that narrow prison like ghosts.

"Tambour is exactly what its name implies, a great drum of rock standing six hundred feet above the sea. The top is a shallow saucer of about fifteen acres, with a thin soil of peat and guano covered in the brief summer with coarse grass and little knots of bake-apple and labrador tea. Not a tree, not a bush. Hosts of sea-birds—gulls, terns, Mother Carey's chickens, plover, puffins (which the Hennessys called sea-parrots)—nesting in the peat or in crannies of the sheer cliffs; all vanishing in winter. And winter six months long, sometimes longer, with a savage wind for ever howling in the stays and aerials. Snowstorms day after day, when you couldn't even get to the lighthouse, when a trip to the store shed for a bag of coal was an expedition to the Pole; when you wondered what kept the little wooden shacks, the squat wooden lighthouse, yes, and the mast itself, aerials, stays, and all, from flying over the lip of that saucer into oblivion. And on clear days nothing to see in any direction but a confusion of ice-floes grinding at the base of the drum, with a sound rolling up the cliffs menacing and unforgettable; and at night the mysterious splendour of the Northern Lights with their inescapable message of challenge and ruthless power.

"In fair weather you could walk about the rim of that saucer in the sky, like a prisoner out for exercise in a space roughly circular and perhaps three hundred yards across. During the first four years those poor devils wore a track like a circus ring about the place. But after '17 they exercised no more, accepting the imprisonment of the weather-beaten shack, keeping the rotation of watches with habitual efficiency, eating the unvarying tinned meals that silent and morose woman prepared for them, sleeping as many hours as they could wring from consciousness. When the steamer came in the fall of '17 they went aboard and begged the captain to take them off—Carleton, Deveaux, and Killigrew—a trio of feverish bearded scarecrows. He refused to listen, of course, and ordered them ashore. From the clifftop they watched the ship depart, and cursed it passionately. Mrs Tucker heard them. She said nothing then, but from that time on she emerged from her silence, sympathising with them, going over and over again with them the emptiness of life in this wretched place, encouraging them to talk of their strangled hopes and ambitions, the places and people they would like to see, the things they would like to do.

"I think she was a little mad, even then. I think she got a certain pleasure out of stirring their misery. But I know, too, that she'd made up her mind to leave Tambour for ever, and she knew how it could be done. Droll, wasn't it? You'd have thought Sara Tucker the one person content in that little secluded hell; for she'd never seen anything else, and although she could read and write, and in fact like most station wives could put on the 'phones and handle a key as well as any man, she was abysmally ignorant. But it was the dead boy, you see. At her request they'd buried him just beyond the kitchen window, and with a cold chisel Tucker had cut a simple 'Bobby. 1917' in a granite boulder beside the grave. She saw it whenever she looked out. Yet somehow, perhaps from a biblical paragraph about resurrection and a life hereafter, she had a notion that Bobby'd merely gone away from Tambour Island, and that somewhere in the bright amazing world beyond the skyline, of which these nostalgic young men talked as of Paradise, she might find him again. It was mad, yet pathetically reasonable. There was the aurora before her eyes every clear winter night, a proof, a vision splendid. So she played on those bedevilled men as on a harp. She tried to play on her husband too, but Tucker clung stubbornly to his dream of twenty thousand dollars and a farm beside the Nashwaak. His obsession was a match for hers, and with thirteen years behind him of the twenty he'd written off his life in 1904, he was not to be moved.

"And so it went on through '18. The world rocked with great events, but not a ripple touched Tambour; and in October, that momentous October of '18, came the last straw. The supply steamer, the wheezing old *General Wolfe*, vanished somewhere in the Gulf. Nobody ever knew what happened. She had a good wireless equipment and she'd weathered many storms. Perhaps she struck a mine—the big cruising U-boats sowed off the Nova Scotia coast in the last two years of the war. At all events she disappeared without a word, and nothing was ever seen of her again but a lifebuoy that drifted ashore on Cape Breton early in '19. You see what it meant? Those exiles on Tambour had to put in another winter, and on short rations. You could read the story of that winter on the calendar in the store shed.

"Nov. 30/18. Last tin of peaches.
Dec. 16/18. No more condensed milk, no tobacco.
Dec. 25/18. Christmas dinner, canned mutton, spuds, bread, tea.

"By the end of January they were down to corned beef—salt beef in the barrel—salt cod-fish, potatoes, and bread. In March they sent off word that they were suffering from scurvy and demanded relief at once. After all, the war was over. All that long accumulated impatience consumed them now like a flame. The resumption of ordinary radio traffic with its rush of peaceful business kept their watch hours busy, but it held no interest for them now. And the sight of the full drums of gasolene (which they could neither eat nor drink), of all their supplies the one thing plentiful, added to their disgust. But ships were scarce; and when the authorities got a ship the ice was still a barrier, though the sea was clear for miles round Tambour.

"Then the woman got her way. In her primitive cunning, curiously enlightened by a first-rate knowledge of their duties, Sara Tucker had seen the way long ago, but they wouldn't listen until now. She insisted they were victims of indifference on the part of the authorities, whom she apostrophised as Them People. And the transmitting key — she pointed it out with a long dramatic finger —with its brass bar and tension springs and ebonite knob, That Thing was the key to freedom. For Tambour was a vital link in the long coastal chain. Without it the whole scheme of communication broke down. If Tambour fell deaf and dumb, Them People would do something—and quickly.

"So they went on strike. Yes! Those ragged bearded men in that rocky prison halfway between sea and sky went on strike, like waiters, like miners, like longshoremen in a wages wrangle! They kept their watches, mind you; but when called with messages from ship or shore they simply answered that Tambour was 'not accepting traffic until relief of staff.' You think that sounds preposterous? How d'you think it sounded on the air, with every ship and shore station for three hundred miles picking it up? How d'you think it sounded when the chief operator at Cape Torrent, a hundred miles away, came on the air, reasoning with them patiently like a Dutch uncle, and was invited—all in good plain dots and dashes—to go to hell? Finally he asked for Tucker, and Tucker's heavy hand answered on the Tambour Island key—Tucker's unmistakable V's, his characteristic C's—with the first dash a shade longer than the second—a dozen things, like handwriting — but *you* know. And Tucker was obdurate like the rest. 'Presume you understand serious consequences to you and staff?' crackled Cape Torrent — you could read the amazement, the righteous anger, behind that key, in the queer flick at the end of the words, in every ripple of dots—you could fairly see the man's face. After you've pounded brass a few years you get that uncanny sixth sense—what the Highlanders of Cape Breton would call *da shealladh*—but you've been in the game, *you* know.

"But they didn't care a hoot for consequences, those lost people on Tambour. Tucker, unmistakably Tucker, answered firmly, 'We are finished with duty here. Take us off and do what you like.' Tucker the reliable! The trusty unfailing Tucker! Tucker the man foresworn to twenty years of duty, regarded up and down the coast as part of Tambour itself! How could that angry man at Cape Torrent, how could any of us eavesdroppers at the 'phones of ships and shore stations know that Tucker was ill, flat on his back, and that Sara Tucker was at the key imitating every inflection of Tucker's hand—forging his signature if you like. Mad? Of course it was mad! But the whole world had been mad for four years, what did a little more matter? We others, listening in, laughed our heads off. You seldom heard anything as good as that in a pair of duty 'phones. And we made our mirth audible. You know that sign we had—HI—for a laugh? You could hear ships scattered over half the ocean tapping out HI—HI—HI—like frogs in a swamp in spring, high notes and low, fixed sparks and quenched sparks and rotary-synchronous sparks; just HI, the little ripple of dots, bubbling like laughter, that and no more; no call sign, no word to betray the individual hand on the key, not even a dash to reveal the peculiarities of the offending spark, nothing that an embarrassed and vengeful operator-in-charge could identify and log. You could fancy the apoplexy at Cape Torrent.

"Well, that was the mutiny at Tambour, famous for a time, a legend now. Two weeks after that defiant dot-and-dash conversation with Cape Torrent—and during this time all traffic in the chain had been strangled at Tambour—the mutineers came on the air for the last time. It was Carlie Carleton's fist—after one word you could see the man—and he pounded out, 'Tambour Island on fire,' and then simply 'SK'—that ultimate I-have-spoken sign which always sounded so much more like an Indian than the Berne Convention. After that, silence. Cape Torrent called Tambour intermittently for a week and then gave it up. Tambour was dead. There was nothing to do but ship a new crew and new equipment as soon as the ice permitted, and to take off Tucker and the rest. They were all given their back pay and fired when they got ashore. Lucky to get off so lightly, I suppose; but a lot of things were being written off the books just then—*c'est la guerre, you* know, and they'd had a hard time. The burning of the wireless station was put down to accident. They all swore to that, and there was nobody to deny it. And the old station had outlived its usefulness in any case."

"One moment," I said. "How do you know all this?"

He smiled and regarded his spats and polished shoes. "I was one of the relief crew. We went up there in the *General Brock* in April of '19, with a complete new outfit—bungalow, apparatus, stores, everything—and carpenters to put the building together and an engineer to install the gear. The new operator-in-charge was a fellow named Garratt, who'd been badly wounded in France and invalided out of the army in the summer of '18. And there was Horlick and Joe Bannister and a cook named Trews. I shared a cabin with Garratt on the *Brock.* He was a quiet chap, engaged to a girl in Toronto, and he'd persuaded Them People to change the usual bungalow design so that he'd have a separate two-room apartment at one end. His plans were all made. She was to come up on the fall boat, and the captain, or some missionary on board, would marry them. He showed me her picture, a tall girl with fair hair and glasses. She was one of those girls who look all right with glasses. D'you know what I mean? I told Garratt, 'She's charming'—it was the truth. They'd been at college together, intending to marry when he graduated, but the war came, and all in all they'd waited six years. He was very much in love, I could see. A young wife on one of those isolated stations was considered rather a nuisance, but somehow I felt with Garratt that life would be more pleasant on Tambour with Eveline Standish there. Just a hunch, you know.

"We ran into ice about forty miles from Tambour; slob stuff, nothing serious, though it made an awful racket down in the hold where our carpenters were sorting over the bundles and barrels and timbers of that ready-to-erect bungalow. We were all on deck when the island rose out of the sea in a collar of mist. It was a fine spring day, I remember, and the mist burned off, and when the ship's siren whooped in the cliffs the sea-birds rose in a cloud, shining in the sun, dipping and hovering and crying in mournful half-human voices like a generation of lost souls. We stared up that tall black height and wondered what we'd find up there; you know, like archæological people finding an inaccessible plateau and speculating on traces of a lost world on top of it. There was a series of ladders in the cliff, iron rungs fastened in the rock, with little platforms on convenient shelves, but only a sailor or a steeplejack could have used it. We went up in a glorified bosun's-chair let down from the cliff-top and drawn up by a gasolene engine in charge of the lighthouse keeper. Captain O'Shane had a rigger look over it before anybody else was permitted. All the stores, apparatus, people, everything had to be slung up to the top in that dizzy way.

"Garratt and I went up together. The lighthouse keeper was busy at the engine, a small man in patched blue overalls with a face as dark as an Eskimo's, and his wife stood beside him all figged out in a dove-coloured coat, a muff, and a hat—the sort of hat women wore back in 1908. There was a group sitting on a granite boulder just beyond. The mutineers. By gad, I felt sorry for them. I didn't know the full story then, but it was written in their ragged jerseys and patched trousers and broken boots, and in their thin yellow faces and their hard sullen eyes. They'd had a tough time. I couldn't resist a pious there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-goes-Baxter feeling and a certain indignation at the whims of circumstance which reduced four young and healthy men to such shabby and hostile scarecrows. They rose as we walked towards them, and we shook hands all round. They clung to the habit of silence they'd acquired in that inhuman monastery, answering questions curtly, and shrugging their threadbare shoulders. Killigrew alone was courteous. I'd met him once, in Quebec. He complained of pains in his stomach and muscles and said all their legs were swollen. 'Scurvy,' he said with a thin smile. But it was beri-beri. The ship's doctor told me afterwards. I was surprised, for I'd always thought beri-beri a tropical disease that had to do with eating rice. He said it was endemic on parts of the Labrador and Newfoundland coasts, and in isolated fishing settlements as far south as Nova Scotia. The diet, you know—dried fish and bread and molasses and tea.

"They'd shaved, and the shorn skin had a peculiar look, dead white below the sallow parchment of their cheek-bones and foreheads; but their hair was long and shaggy. Even Carlie Carleton, who'd become bald during his stay on Tambour, had thick tufts of unkempt hair protruding absurdly like horns from the sides of his head. Killigrew had been a good-looking chap when I knew him in Quebec; he looked twenty years older now with his yellow face and sunken eyes and the gaps in his front teeth. He was a caricature. They regarded us with bitter eyes, and I think we felt rather abashed, as if we were part of the world which had thrust them into exile and forgotten them. Our clothes, our fresh faces and well-kept teeth, our cocky air of men who'd taken a part in tremendous events and would soon put *this* to rights, everything about us—even Garratt's limp—offended them.

"They wouldn't stir from their post by the cliff edge, feverishly awaiting their chance to go down to the steamer; and when they went, Carleton, Deveaux, and Killigrew together, sitting with their arms about each other's shoulders in the bosun's-chair, they gave us one last defiant look and vanished. They had no baggage, nothing but the rags they wore. That, I think, was as pathetic as anything else about them.

"Tucker waited for his wife. She came striding over the dead brown grass and the crisp rustling bake-apple vines, a tall grim figure in woollen stockings and a wrinkled brown skirt, with a red-and-green chequered mackinaw coat, a grey muffler swathed about her tall neck, a pair of men's pre-war button boots on her feet. She was hatless and her hair was black as night, not a grey hair in it, neatly combed and brushed and piled in a Queen Alexandra coiffure, and her long face was sallow and morbid like the others, but with a strength you couldn't find in theirs. But it was her eyes that caught you. Her eyes were very large, of a light hazel colour, limpid and shallow as spoonfuls of brown sherry, with an effusion of light from within that was pure triumph. She had conquered! They were leaving Tambour at last! She didn't exactly ignore us, she stared through us. Tucker stood there waiting, with his bowed shoulders, his sagged cheeks and tired eyes, at the cliff edge. She took his arm and turned for a last look at Bobby's grave, and the squat wooden cone of the lighthouse, the lonely store shed of the wireless station, the impressive ruins of the station itself, the cellar full of ashes and twisted pipe and wire, the scorched and rusting frames of the engine and dynamo still rigidly bolted to their concrete shelf, the contorted skeletons of the beds — the Tuckers', Carleton's, and the double-deck thing — standing upright in the ashes just where they'd dropped through the burning floor, the tangle of metal and wire that was all that remained of the instrument room, and forty feet away, untouched, without even a blister, the tall white mast thrusting its rigid stays and aerials into the sky like a gigantic stripped umbrella. Then she turned, and Tucker helped her into the dangling chair with a rather touching mixture of courtesy and solicitude, and they dropped from our sight, staring fixedly, not at us, nor the cliff, nor the ship below, but straight off into space.

"The carpenters, the engineer, the stores and material came up into the sky with us. In the store shed we found three little biers of blankets and ragged quilts. After the fire Killigrew, Carleton, and Deveaux had lived like cavemen in that hovel, refusing the cramped quarters of the lighthouse, but getting their scanty meals there. They wouldn't stay under the same roof with Sara Tucker. After the fire they were afraid of her. We set up a stove in the shed, and the carpenters knocked some bunks together, and we all lived there till the new station was complete. On that first afternoon the ship's doctor paid us a visit. He wanted to look at the Hennessys. They insisted they were all right, and so they were. The doctor murmured something about inherited tolerance and mithridatism, but Hennessy put it down simply to capelin—God's gift to the Newfoundlander—those small overgrown sardines that fling themselves upon the beaches in summer and lie there in windrows waiting to be gathered up for bait, yes, and for food. In the early summer of '18 Hennessy had descended the cliff and in a small sandy crevice at its foot gathered enough to fill two kegs. He'd dried them on the granite rock in the sun, Newfoundland style, 'for candy' he said. Yes! He and his wife ate them between meals, in the evenings before bed, one or two at a time, like dried fruit—like candy. A quick jerk takes away the head and the backbone with it, and you eat the rest of that curled oily wisp, guts and all. The wireless men wouldn't touch 'em, but Mrs Tucker did, and she and the Hennessys had no beri-beri. Think what you like. The doctor said it was preposterous, but he made a note of capelin out of sheer medical curiosity.

"Captain O'Shane was anxious to get away. He had other posts to visit, and besides the sea was stirring and he didn't like the look of the sky in the east. He was to call back in three weeks and pick up the carpenters and the engineer. We were too busy to watch his departure. Those were full days, I tell you. The carpenters were glad to turn into their bunks after supper, but Garratt and I used to go over to the lighthouse of an evening for a pow-wow with the Hennessys. I can see them now, in the light of a small kerosene lamp that stood on the kitchen table and made our shadows enormous on the blue-painted walls, a pair of small greying people, exactly alike, with round marmoset faces and short thick noses and little bright deep-set eyes, and a habit of wrinkling their foreheads every time they spoke, as if it were a matter for the utmost concentration. Hennessy smoked a short black clay, with cotton wound about the stem to save wear on his false teeth. He was a 'liv-yeer'—a white man born on the Labrador—and made his rare conversations in the rapid half-intelligible English of the outports. (We were a week figuring out that 'ballycutter' meant inshore ice.)

"Slowly, between long silences, with many digressions and patient returns to the subject, we wormed out of them the story behind the mutiny. It was the proper way. Told all at once, as I've told you, it's fantastic; but incident by incident, winter by winter, with a little revealing vignette here and there—'Taunt an' strong, she was, an' had the evil eye; no wonder the child perished—didn't she eat him with her eyes from morn to night?' And 'A fine able man, that Tucker, an' could wrassle two o' the others together; but she wrung the strength out o' him, yiss, wrung him dry, that she did, an' made herself master o' him an' the rest.' And 'Said our Hail Marys every time she went out, an' saved ourselves from harm, but Deveaux never said his prayers, an', o' course, them poor Proddestant devils hadn't a chance'—bit by bit the story rang true. You could see every step of that human decline and fall as you'd watch the disintegration of a sugar lump in water. They went to pieces, that was it. And all the time the woman watched them with those incandescent eyes.

"Tucker was ill when they went on strike. He lay there a week, two weeks, listening, knowing everything—the spark rang through the shack like a trumpet—and one afternoon she found him standing beside the bed. His strength was returning. She pushed him back again, deaf to his censure, his weak anger; but tomorrow he would be on his feet again. She was in a ferment of fear and anger and extravagant hopes. It was a crisis, and she met it boldly. There was one supreme way to silence Tambour. That night, in the small hours, she got up and dressed. Tucker was heavily asleep. The engine was running. Carleton was on watch, and he'd put the emergency battery on charge. The door of the instrument-room was ajar, but Carleton was twiddling the receiver dials intently, the 'phones clamped over his ears, and in the explosions of the gasolene exhaust, the whirr of dynamo and slatting of belts she could work without fear of discovery.

"There were two fire extinguishers, one in the engine-room, the other on the kitchen wall. She threw them over the cliff. The gasolene drums lay cheek by jowl in the moonlight, thirty or forty yards from the shack, where they could be rolled easily down the slope to the engine-room tank. They were always stowed like that; convenient, you see, and a safe distance from the buildings. She took the big wrench and unscrewed a plug, and rolled the drum until it was slopping gasolene into her bucket. The rest was easy — a matter of splashing the walls and floor of the engine-room, throwing in a bit of lighted waste, and slamming the door. Carleton heard it, and came to the door of the instrument-room with the 'phones on his head, wondering why she was up at that hour. She ran into the bedroom to arouse Tucker and get him out. Then came the explosion, the one thing she hadn't figured on. The engine-room was a hot little coop, even in winter. I suppose she'd saturated the place with gasolene, and the stuff vaporised almost at once. It blew out the engine-room windows and burst the thin matchboard partition and shot a stream of flame through the kitchen that scorched Carlie Carleton's face in the instrument-room doorway. Deveaux and Killigrew woke at once. It was impossible to reach the main door, for it opened into the kitchen, a mass of flame by that time. They snatched up some clothes and scrambled out of their bedroom window, just in time to smash Tucker's and help the woman drag him out. By gad, it was a close thing. Another minute and they'd have roasted, the lot of them.

"In the meantime the engine, with mechanical fortitude, was still running in the midst of the flames. Carleton called QST—the general call to all stations—and sent out that brief message of warning and farewell. He might have sent more — the engine ran for another five minutes as a matter of fact, though I fancy the dynamo belt burned through pretty quickly. But he turned to salvage something. D'you know what it was? On a shelf in the north corner, neatly bound with wire, lay the *procès-verbal* sheets, the official log of their endless watch-keeping, with an entry pencilled every fifteen minutes during five years and six months—the only thing they had to show for two thousand days and nights on Tambour. Yes! Of all things valuable in that room he saved that fruitless record of their faithfulness. Ah, I tell you the tears came to my eyes when I heard of it. The pathos, the tragedy of that one instinctive act! The Hennessys came running, frightened, and they all stood together in the last crumbling husks of the winter's snow, while Mrs Tucker cried aloud the story of her cleverness, detail by detail, like a pleased child, and the sea-birds, roused from their crannies by the explosion and the glare, fluttered all about the rock, filling the night with their querulous voices; and the station burned with a tall yellow flame, like a candle, like a beacon on that high rock in the lonely sea.

"Yes, that was the tale we heard in the lighthouse kitchen. Garratt became very sombre as it unfolded. And as the days went by, and the new station rose upon the old site like an angular wooden phœnix, I could see him brooding. The morning we moved in, delighted with our new quarters, I found him standing alone in his tiny apartment at the west end of the building. It was the kitchen, full of the smell of fresh paint and the fragrance of sawn pine, where we operators would come three times a day to eat Eveline Garratt's meals.

"'What's on your mind, Garratt?' I said. He was silent a moment and then pointed to the window, to the small grave and the spring sun shining on the crudely lettered stone.

"'I can't go through with it,' he said in a hopeless voice. 'I couldn't bring Eve here. I was mad to think of it; for I knew the sort of place it was, and she didn't.'

"'What are you going to do?' I said.

"'Call it off. M'Gregor's tuning the new transmitter now, we'll be starting watches to-morrow, and the *Brock*'ll be here at the end of the week. I'll write Eve, explain everything—she'll understand. Perhaps after two or three years I can get a transfer to the mainland somewhere near civilisation.'

"You can guess what it must have cost Garratt to make that decision, what it cost him to write the letter. They'd waited six years, and he'd been through the inferno of the war and must have felt that life owed him the happiness he was refusing. He made a thorough job of it, the whole story, sparing nothing, and a detailed description of Tambour, the station, the lighthouse, the operators—he showed me the letter—and the Hennessys. Not content with that he took snapshots right and left with his Kodak and turned them out, postcard size, with the neat little developing and printing outfit he'd brought to record their adventures together. It was all there. I doubt if any outpost on the whole long seaboard was ever so coldly and thoroughly examined or illustrated. As a postscript he wrote: 'Don't take it too much to heart, my darling, and be sure to write by the next boat, which sails some time in October or early November—Carrington will let you know the exact date. Make it a long letter, Eve. I want to know everything about you, what you've done, what you're doing, what you're wearing, what you're reading — everything. And some snapshots, please. Give me enough to feed my empty mind till the boat comes again in spring. Good-bye, my darling. It's just a year or two longer, that's all, and *après le tambour* sounds so much better than *après la guerre*.'

"And so the *General Brock* went away with M'Gregor and the carpenters and Garratt's letter and Garratt's heart. And the summer went by. Garratt stood a watch regularly, and in the usual rotation, instead of picking a comfortable daytime trick for himself as most O-in-C's did. There was no swank about Garratt. We all got along well together, though, of course, summer was no test. It was winter and the long imprisonment of cold and storm that would try our comradeship; but then we could look forward to spring and—all but Garratt—relief and a journey back to the world. In September we began to count days and write letters. Long bulky letters they were, too; the mere act of writing was a pleasure, as if in this way you could project yourself across the miles in an envelope. I learned something of the art of putting words together in those days. Nowadays I snap something at a stenographer and heave a sigh of relief. The urge is gone, the art is gone. It's something to be young and lonely, after all.

" Not that life on Tambour was pleasant, you understand. Even in summer there were weeks on end when fog shut in and left us in a damp suspension between sea and sky, with long grey days, and the white beam of the lighthouse making futile gestures in the thick nights, when our matches turned sodden and useless, and our high voltage leaked blue fire over the lead-in insulators, and the incessant drip-drip from the eaves was the loneliest sound in the world. Then the old sullen spirit of Tambour seemed to creep about our four walls like a physical presence, as if that deranged unhappy woman were abroad. You could feel it. It was uncanny. The island seemed bewitched by that queer affair we were all trying to forget. It was all around you, in the air you breathed, in the rock underfoot, in the cry of the birds. You couldn't shake it off.

" On just such a night I sat on watch in the instrument-room. It was two o'clock in the morning and the 'phones were fairly quiet, a few faint sparks whispering together on the other side of the night. I had a good fire in the stove, for the nights were cold—it was late October. The supply boat was leaving Quebec in four or five days. Out of the stillness sprang the voice of Cape Torrent —remember that high wailing spark ?—calling Tambour, offering a dead-head — a franked message—but *you* know all that. I thought of nobody but myself, notification of relief, a miraculous transfer to civilisation, a snug post somewhere along the St Lawrence perhaps. Youth—the world my oyster—ah, well. I made the engine-room in three or four jumps and gave a heave on the duty-engine fly-wheel as if to tear the whole thing up by the roots. It snorted, and the exhaust began to pop steadily, the generator rising to a shrill whine, and by that time I was back at the key, snapping K—' go ahead '—and grabbing at pencil and message pad. It was very short, a brief flutter of dots and dashes in the hollow night—

" Garratt, Tambour Island.
Coming.
Eve.

" That was all. I sat there like a fool, staring at that one tremendous word as if some hand other than mine had written it. Dick Geddie was at Cape Torrent's key—I knew his hand—but beyond Geddie and the coast, beyond the rivers and mountains, the bustle and the emptiness, beyond a thousand miles I could see that grand girl in Toronto with her tranquil smile and her valiant heart and her love for Garratt. Cape Torrent wailed into the night again, demanding a receipt. I flicked out a curt

'R' and threw down the 'phones. I stepped to the door—I don't know why. The freezing October fog, the darkness, the cold drip from the eaves, the beam of the lighthouse fumbling silently in the gloom, the chafing of the sea at the foot of the cliffs—it was all there, the eternal Tambour. But there was a difference. What was it? What *was* it? A fantasy, a sensation of relief, as if an intolerable pressure had been lifted from my shoulders, from all our shoulders. Call it delusion if you like; a change of mood, a kink of imagination—anything you choose. I only know that a new spell, something warm and sweet and sane, had come upon Tambour and changed it for all of us. Love, faith, courage shining across a thousand miles of darkness like the white lamp on the high rock. All in that one word."

The train had come to a stop. In the passage-way outside the smoking compartment I saw a porter struggling with substantial leather hand-baggage, and then a woman stood in the doorway crying, "Arnold! Here we are—and Evie and Johnnie are waiting on the platform—do hurry!" She was tall and blonde, in the middle forties I should say, with a figure matronly but well controlled, a still attractive woman. She wore shell-rimmed glasses and had about her that pleasant imperiousness of the capable woman long used to the command of an adoring family.

"Coming!" said Garratt hastily.

DOINGS AT GREAT PUNCHEMWELL.

A.R.P.—The course of A.R.P. ran, one may suppose, as smoothly in Great Punchemwell as elsewhere. We had our ups and downs, of course. One of the downs was the non-arrival of our gas-mask lorry. It broke down fourteen miles away, but a Greatheart of our village sent out a salvage vessel, and our masks arrived a day late, on a Sunday at 10.55 A.M., and found the Parish Hall locked, the keeper of the key in the vestry and three-quarter way into a surplice. But the morning service was only delayed three minutes and all was well.

I do not know whether the non-arrival of a number of young Londoners is to be counted as an up or a down—a down, I think; for the children would have been, for the most part, welcome. The smaller the cottage destined to receive them, and the larger the family resident there, the greater the welcome.

Then, while the Crisis was hard upon us, the public flocked to the Parish Hall, and the gas-masks went like hot cakes. But when things had cooled off a little, the stream of aspirants shrank and finally ceased. The fitters, after four days at it, sighed and shut up shop. But there was a maskless residue of free-born Britishers who refused to fetch, and some yet freer born who refused to receive their masks when brought to their doors. Authority, when referred to, replied, "Let 'em choke." And when asked about gas-masks for babies, said, "We really can't say just yet."

Drake's Drum.—There was one faint heart in the village who (he confesses it now with shame) began to think that masks and funk-holes, coming on top of a long course of 'Safety First,' might necessitate a tap or two of Drake's Drum. These fears were proved groundless at a meeting of the Branch which he attended soon after the issue of gas-masks, as follows:—

"Our worthy President will now say a few words to you about A.R.P. wardens." Thus the Chairman.

His Worthiness rises. He is not really an outsize in worth, but the Branch decrees that he always be styled 'worthy,' in the same way as the Chairman is 'genial,' the Hon. Secretary 'hard-working,' and as you, reader, would be referred to as 'gentle.' As regards the suitable collective term to be used in addressing our members, we are in some doubt. 'Comrades' now smacks of sickle and hammer. 'My friends' suggests the pulpit. Nothing at all sounds bald. 'Gentlemen' is pretty safe, and we often use that. And that is how our worthy President addresses us now. I am glad to see that he pushes out his lower jaw and is going to be aggressive. He begins by remarking that he has never been in love with Safety First, and considers it un-British. He says that he hates gas-masks and trenches. But "There you are." From this we understand that these have come to stay, and that they have our President's sanction for doing so. The speaker continues on the aggressive note. "A long time ago," he says, "there used to be a popular song with the refrain, 'We don't want to fight, but, by jingo, if we do.' That's us now." (Applause.) He counsels his hearers to repeat this refrain silently to themselves if wearing gas-masks, and aloud to their patients if fitting them. He tells us that it is up to the Branch to see that our village remains Great Punchemwell, and does not slide at a Dictator's menace into becoming Little Cowering. That seemed to be coming it a bit too strong. We are a pretty tough lot here. But most of the audience miss the point and look dazed but polite.

"I now come to the point," continued our President. "Great Punchemwell wants A.R. wardens, and it looks to the Branch as a body of tried warriors to find 'em."

We liked this. Being called 'warriors' gave us that nice warm feeling, much better than 'old soldiers.' I noted that Amos Piff, who had come in under the Derby Scheme A.D. 1918, and attained to warriorhood working in a war cemetery away behind the lines, showed himself to be in profound agreement with the speaker.

We in our Branch are not great sticklers for parliamentary procedure, and the speaker remained on his legs while John Meek got on to his to interject a remark. "I was listenin' in las' night," said Meek, "to that 'Itler. Seemed to me that he spoke very bumptious." Having told us this, Meek nodded to his President to resume, and sat down. The latter said that he saw Mr Meek's point (which is more than I did), and was about to resume when there rose a usually silent member, wearing a row of tattered medal ribbons, showing service in India, China, South Africa, and the late war. President or no President, Styles had something to say, and must say it or burst.

"Friends all—I'm an old sweat, I am. Wot I sez is this. T'other day I attends the free issue at the Parish Hall. I took my mask meanin' to keep it. On my way home I 'appens past our War Memorial. I stops to have a dekko and read the names over. A tidy lot there were, too, and all Punchemwell lads. Somehow I felt awmost like crying—they bein' most all beknownst to me. But that sort o' thing ain't British or used not. And then I starts thinkin'. 'What about our lads here now?' I sez. 'Anything wrong with them?' I sez. 'No,' I sez. 'If them chaps on our Memorial could fight, why, so can our young chaps now, and so they will. To 'ell with gas-masks,' I sez. It come over me all of a sudden-like—reg'lar flare-up 'twas, and with that I 'bout-turns and back to the Parish Hall and I sez to the bloke wot fitted me, 'Thanks,' I sez perlite like, 'I've brung it back.' 'But people 'as to 'ave a mask,' sez the bloke. 'No,' I sez, 'not if they gives them up to those as'll want 'em more'n us.' 'But 'tis a free issue,' sez the bloke. 'Anyone can 'ave a mask as wants one.' 'I ain't a-meanin' our own folk,' I sez. 'Then 'oo *do* you mean?' he sez. 'Jerry and them Ice-creamers,' I answers. See?" The last word was addressed to the speaker's audience. And they did see.

"I'm sorry for interruptin', sir," he continued, addressing the President. "But wot I meantersay is, sir, and all 'ere, is if I'm too old to fight (I ain't, but there 'tis), I'll be a warden and wear a mask or anything else the King, God bless 'im, wants me for. W'en I gives back that ole gas-mask, I done it sudden, though perlite. Because I knows our lads here be all right, and they'll fight as good as our lads did las' time. And I knows that them Jerries and Ice-creamers 'll start 'ollerin' for masks and what not a sight louder nor wot we shall." The speaker subsided. His rough eloquence was a tap of the drum. It warmed the cockles.

"And now," continued the President, "if you'll pass along, you'll find enrolment forms on the table by the door. Take one; read it through. Show 'em to your wives. We want ladies as well as men. The form says over thirty for wardens, but the Branch says over forty, or, better still, over fifty. We'll leave the younger jobs to the younger men."

AT SCHOOL. — Our village school is equipped with one-piece desk forms, one and indivisible, well adapted to the cubic contents and linear measurements of our young, but rather a tight squeeze for some wardens and quite impossible for those of more generous spread. The room has an immense open fireplace warranted to roast or freeze according to the distance one sits from it.

If the young scholars who learn here were only half as attentive and eager as these middle-aged and elderly wardens, how easy would be the lot of our Mr Squeers. Mr Squeers is, by-the-bye, an occupant of a pupil's desk, while teacher's rostrum is held by a member of the Force, who is to lecture us on Warfare Gases. He looks a little blue after a nine-mile drive in a blizzard, and this may add to the cold austerity with which he turns down our request to be allowed to smoke. Some of us, too, have tramped through the snow to the lecture hall, and require every solace possible to folk undergoing the first of seven two-hour lectures on gas. Teacher says he will give us, about half-way through, a ten minutes' interval, during which we may smoke and ask questions. We are a law-abiding nation, especially when policemen give orders or refuse requests. But what would have happened had we defied him ?

He introduces us to all the gases—a shuddersome crowd—liquid, solid, vapour, choking, blistering, tear, nose, lethal, and non-lethal. None of us had ever made a nastier lot of new acquaintances.

Teacher touched familiarly on this grisly crowd, and the first hour went easily enough. Any questions ? No—no one wanted anything but a smoke and a warm—no one except the bright boy in plus-fours (not one of Us, but from a distant hamlet). His name when we watched for it during roll-call later on proved to be Horace Braggins. And he did not really seek information, but only to show off that he knew that C.A.P. was short for a gas called by a much longer name.

That sort of thing did not go down with us. Enough for us that C.A.P. smelt of pineapple or geranium, or garlic or mouldy hay, or something. We felt that Braggins was going to be a menace to us. Just as the precious ten fireside minutes were up, someone proposed and someone seconded the following resolution : "That the hottest place in hell was too cool for the man who diverted gas knowledge to the purposes of warfare." An amendment altering the wording to "shall have his part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" was turned down. Teacher then gave a 'Back-to-your-desks-boys' look, and back we went.

Alf Bodger, who in the first instance had got slowly and insinuatingly into his one-piece place, failed now to get in in a hurry. Not his fault in the least. His build, both fore and aft, prevented hurried ingress into tight places. He did his last hour's lecture standing against the wall.

Teacher now took a relentless roll-call before starting again, both to see that those who had missed lectures in other gas-courses were present and making good, and that Great Punchemwell absentees were marked down for completing their course elsewhere later on.

We finished the evening without any real hitch. It was foolish, of course, of Joseph Smewins to allude, out loud, to his respirator as a gas-mask. Teacher overheard him and pounced. Joseph was to be more careful in future. And it was more than foolish—teacher's start and shudder almost made it a blasphemy — for Frankie Hattat to allude to the snout-piece of his respirator as its snout. But the Hattats were always a shiftless crowd. There was something dreadfully cold and menacing about teacher when he said in a low but penetrating voice, as he fondled a respirator and laid a loving finger on its snout, " Container, gentlemen, PLEASE."

ON SNOUTS.—The heading does not refer to the nasal part of a respirator. It refers to a feature of our village—the immense nose of Isaac Frumkin, senior.

By the third lecture or so we had begun to achieve the team spirit, the corporate sense and a feeling of camaraderie. This was partly because once a week and on bitter winter nights we met people we should never otherwise have met, and with them exchanged gossip and local news. And partly because the extreme hardships of that school room, that open fire, and those benches gave us a feeling of comrades in misfortune.

In no other way should we ever have come to allude to Mr Frumkin's nose as our nose. The date was 9th January 1939. On that day teacher arrived with a follower—a very large member of the Force, hung about with khaki-coloured bags, in much the same way as an air balloon merchant is hung about with his wares. Till then we had lived and borne with the Frumkin promontory, but had never regarded it as a menace. The bags contained our respirators (' civilian-duty '), and Police Constable Cronk, who brought them, was to fit us turn by turn. All went smoothly. Several were nearly suffocated when Fitter Cronk placed his vast hand over the container-mouth, held it there a shade too long, and barked out " Breathe in." But that was perfectly in order.

" And now, sir, your turn." Fitter turned to Frumkin, and with well-practised hand, skilful in enduing handcuffs or, since the Crisis, respirators, clapped into the matter rather roundly. That is to say, he rammed Isaac's nose into the container rather hard, slipped the head-harness over Isaac's head, reeling off the drill-book as he did so, without wasting any time over it, for there was a long waiting list. " There," he said, turning from his prisoner and addressing his audience, " chin well home, centre buckle of head-harness well over the crown of the head and resting below what we call the think-box." All were in cordial agreement over this. Only one protested : the occupant of the respirator. From him there came a muffled plaint of " By doze ! By doze ! " while he made jerky movements of his hands towards think - box. Fitter Cronk arrested these attempts with one superb movement of his hand and all the effortless grace of a strong man holding down a fluttering bird. People might perish from suffocation or what not, but lives were not to be saved by removing respirators contrary to the words of the book, and that was what Frumkin, senior, was plainly up to.

No—the Force did not allow things to be done like that.

Grasping his wretched captive, and turning again to us, Fitter continued his recitative. "Insert two fingers of the right hand under the chin of face-piece; lift respirator off with an upward and backward movement; replace headgear."

Distressed inmate having been released, was able to explain that his nose had been jammed cruel hard against the container; almost pushed into his face, in fact. To us there seemed nothing really wrong with the man. He was rather in the drooling stage as a man released from great tribulation would be, but our frightful nose was only a little pale at the tip—not really dinted to matter, and recovering shape rapidly. What did matter was that all this had prolonged our lessons by at least ten minutes. Fitter monkeyed with the buckles; but, let them out as he would, it was plain that nothing would satisfy our nose. "We'll put you down for a larger size, sir," said Fitter. But the man lied. Frumkin had the adult-size respirator, and there are none larger. There was nothing of the hero about him. Instead of saying, "Leave me to it, comrades," he kept harping on his lungs getting water-logged, with no mask to keep out the gas, in the next war. He did not seem to realise that the great thing was to get on with the job now. But, on the whole, it was a cheering episode in a dull evening.

Fitter Cronk then stood down, and the lecture was resumed. To our surprise our teacher started off in a slightly waggish vein. He was an extraordinarily able lecturer, but had hitherto lacked the *espièglerie* one would associate with talks on the blistering, blinding, and choking of men, women, and children. Referring to our nose, he said, "I regret, gentlemen, that our friend had his nose nearly put out of joint. You will, of course, realise that when we enter the realm of gas and respirators, we have to mind our faces. Pull a long one or make a wry one, and the chin-piece gives trouble. Knitting the brows, or letting chaps or crests fall, however slightly, will at once affect the fit of the head-harness. The whole thing's a face-saving matter, and we must keep a straight face on it. Nor must ladies ever dream of face-raising, not in anti-gas measures. Even undue stiffening of the upper lip may cause trouble."

Now this at the moment struck us as being a jolly good impromptu, and he got his laugh all right. Later, of course, we realised that Frumkin's nose was not the only pebble on the beach—none could be larger, of course, but there might be scores of awkward-sized ones. Teacher had cracked off his joke probably at several lectures. Poor fellow. Our response was but a small reward for gassing month after month in draughty village halls all through the winter. In happier days he would probably have been spending cosy evenings by his own fireside, reading the police news, or burnishing handcuffs, or playing with the little three-and-a-half-year-old daughter to whom he had introduced us in lectures, several times, under the heading "How to fit nervous children." The more sophisticated or cynical among us even suggested that wee girlie was not a wee girlie at all, but only a part of lecture technique.

THE BLACKBOARD ARTIST.—Teacher at the blackboard and with his box of coloured chalks was the world's dab. With a grisly art and a few deft sweeping movements he showed us in turn a mustard-gas blister; a gas-cloud sneaking through a keyhole; the same, on a windy day, barging into the same and other orifices; a high-explosive shell wrecking a first-floor bedroom and sparing the parlour on the ground floor. But especially his art was displayed on blisters. Blob went the red chalk and the blister's angry red matrix appeared. Round and round this twirled the yellow chalk, and we saw our blister growing and spreading outwards. White rooty scriggles showed it eating downwards into our flesh. A few careless sweeps of the duster and this lovely scene faded, and gas-cloud and keyhole took its place. The duster once again, and our home appeared; ground floor and upper floor; a shell doing its stuff just outside; blast and splinters doing theirs in our best bedroom upstairs. The artist told his tale, drew his picture, and pointed his moral. He tried to tell us how certain weathers favoured, while others hindered, the good work of warfare gas. But in this he failed. All weathers seemed to favour it, the foul stuff.

"And now, gentlemen, that finishes us for the evening. Any questions?"

Not a hope of one. We were all too depressed and tired. But stay! Old Rumblebelly rose (the corporate sense of the meeting had given Braggins this name). "When I was in France in 1917——" he began. Someone at the back said, "Oh, stow it!" Teacher affected not to hear.

WAITING FOR THE WAGGON.—In the shadows of the courtyard of the Dog and Duck lurked an enormous tumbril, black as an old-time hearse and about eight times the size. The stuff of both sexes destined to pass through it were gathered in the large public room of the inn, handling respirators. Teacher arrives. He is accompanied by his gas-waggoner—name of Gasper. To reassure those who may feel qualmy, Teacher tells us that his waggon is to contain nothing worse than C.A.P. "Pooh!" say the pot valiant. "Why drag us from hearth and home to have a sniff and shed a tear over him? Why not the fruity old vintage of 1918, with its pleasing reminder of a West Indian fruit?"

The first four victims for the National Razor are carefully looked over to see if they are gas-proof. They pass out into the rain and darkness and mount the waggon-ramp. With so many awaiting their turn, a steady flow of these batches of four through the waggon is essential. A check is caused by a snouty Sidney Carton, who is mopping and mowing with chivalrous intent at a little milliner in jodhpores, recognisable in these as Louisa Slowbore, a young piece quite able to look after herself. She replies to the courteous gestures, "Ta! ever so. I'm quite all right—reelly." "Pass along there," comes a voice from the darkness. And so we pass through an air-lock and into what looks through our breath-dimmed respirator windows like a police cell, lit by one electric bulb. Waggoner Gasper is with us. Someone bolts the cell door outside.

"Please observe the momentary white cloud given off when I releases the gas. Now!" Three persons indicate by muffled grunts, and untruly, that they have observed it. A fourth says, "I can't, officer." Gasper says, "Well, we can't help that." And someone else says, "Shut up and let's get on with it." No one but an ass wants to dally even with C.A.P. longer than need be.

"Now I want you all to lift the face-piece a little and have a sniff. You'll find a few tears will come and perhaps a tingling sensation." We lift, and assure him that we are in floods. But this well-pickled man, probably with no more tears to shed from spending so many hours in his gas-waggon, will not accept our statements. He takes us to the electric light and peers into our windows, much as a shark may peer into the helmet of a diver. He finds two of our party who cannot show a single tear. He rectifies this; we are then allowed to weep our way out of the waggon and are advised to stand awhile in the open air to let C.A.P. escape from our clothes.

The term is finished. We have that demobbed feeling and scamper off home as fast as elderly legs permit, and without one word of thanks to Teacher, Cronk, or the honest waggoner. And now we wear A.R.P. badges varying slightly according to sex of recipient. At least not quite all of us, only the good boys and girls who answered "Here, sir," at every one of the lectures. Defaulters are to receive further treatment.

THE *FRANK A. BENTLEY*.

BY FRANCIS MILTON.

There is an old, old cliché which asserts that Truth is stranger than Fiction. So long as we discriminate between fiction and fantasy this is perfectly true. I did not realise how narrow are the limits we impose until I came to deal with the narrative that forms the subject of this record.

Captain Dwight Hunter, retired sea captain, Cayman Islands born, knew some of the actors in the queer drama, and first told me the story. "Why don't you write it down?" I asked.

"I have," he said, and showed me. In order, as he saw it, to make the tale more palatable, he had disguised it as fiction. I saw at once that this would not do. "Too much coincidence"; I seemed to hear the verdict; "Too artificial. It all works out too nicely." As fiction, yes. But, then, it happens to be true.

Very generously, Captain Hunter turned over the yarn to me. Here it is; a plain, unvarnished narrative of facts; well known in the Caribbean; easily confirmed from American shipping records.

In 1902 the lumber trade was booming in the Southern States. Lumber was a sailing-ship cargo then, and Mobile River was crowded with schooners and square-riggers loading for Cuba, the West Indian Islands, and ports along the Main as far south as the Plate. Mobile water-front was roofed with bowsprits; the river a leafless forest of tall masts.

Among the countless craft sailing out of this port in the trade was a new three-masted schooner, the *Frank A. Bentley.* She was owned by a syndicate of Southern lumbermen and registered under the American flag.

Comparatively few Americans followed the sea at that time, and the *Bentley* was sailed by Cayman Island officers and manned by a Cayman Islands crew. Then (as today), if every Cayman Islands sailor had gone home at the same time, half of them would have been pushed over the edge of the meagre little islands into their natural element, the sea. The Captain's name was John Woods; the mate, Lennie Eden. The *Bentley* ran, regularly as any liner, between Mobile and Matanzas on the north coast of Cuba, carrying lumber outwards and tropical produce, mainly sugar, home. She made swift passages, paying and uneventful.

In the autumn of 1902, while she was loading in Mobile, the mate fell sick. Captain Woods shipped another mate, George Eden, younger brother of the sick man—temporarily, as he thought—and sailed. When he reached Matanzas he learned that Lennie Eden was dead. This was a severe blow to him. The two men were firm friends and had sailed together for many years; as is almost always the case in small island communities, they were not so distantly related. Woods, an elderly man, seemed to lose all heart and sailed for Mobile in a state of great depression. On the voyage he, too, fell sick. In Mobile hospital his case was diagnosed as acute pneumonia, and in a few days he, too, was dead.

The owners were in something of a quandary. Trade was booming; the cargo was ready to load. They asked the new mate, young George Eden, if he knew anyone to whom they could give the command. "I don't know what sort of a man you're looking for," said George, "but I suppose you want an elderly man of great experience like Captain Woods. If you would be satisfied with a younger man, though—what about me?"

This suggestion took the owners aback, but time was money, and no one else known to them was available. After a little hesitation they called George Eden to the office, examined his credentials, and, satisfied, promoted him to the vacancy. The *Bentley* sailed with George Eden as master and resumed her regular round: Mobile — Matanzas — Matanzas —Mobile.

So it went on until the *Bentley* must pretty well have known the way to Matanzas herself.

In July 1903 Mrs Woods, the widow of the late Captain of the *Bentley*, went to see the owners. She would like, she explained, to have her husband's body exhumed and taken to his home, and hers, in Grand Cayman for burial. Would they help her? The owners must have been men of unusual kindliness; they agreed to her request, and, learning that Lennie Eden's family would like his body also brought home, they arranged that the *Bentley*, on her next outward voyage, should make a long detour to the southward and carry the remains of her former officers to Grand Cayman before proceeding to Matanzas with her cargo.

Consequently, on the morning of 3rd August 1903 the *Bentley* arrived off George Town, Grand Cayman. She was deeply laden with lumber and had to anchor well offshore. She flew a great American ensign, across which a wide band of black crepe was sewn. As she came up into the wind to let go her anchor the peak halliards of fore and mizzen were let go, so that the gaffs drooped forlornly —the fore-and-after's token of abandonment to mourning, corresponding to the loosing of the braces in a square-rigger to let the yards swing free.

One man only of the *Bentley's* people was not a Cayman Islander: the mate—I do not know his name. Since all the others naturally wished to go ashore to attend the funeral of their countrymen and former shipmates, Captain Eden arranged that he alone should stay aboard to tend the ship. The funeral was to take place immediately after noon, and as soon as the port formalities were completed all hands went ashore, leaving the mate alone.

Now follows quite the strangest part of the whole affair. Here, in the anchorage off George Town, thirteen schooners were lying that day. One was laid up, unmanned, and does not count, but there lay twelve ships in full commission in active charge of twelve experienced masters and twelve mates — Cayman Islanders, Bay Islanders, Southern Americans. It was the middle of the hurricane season. Yet not one of them realised that a hurricane was right on top of them. The glass must have been falling steadily since before daylight. The sky must have been overcast and threatening all day; for the storm cloud-ring extends for many miles beyond the area of high winds. It was just one of those strange instances of mass aberration for which no explanation can be offered. It may be said in mitigation that no hurricane had struck the Caymans for some years, and people had begun to feel that that part of the Caribbean was exempt. Moreover, in this instance the storm approached the island from the southward and the centre passed to the west, so that the first wind came from the E.N.E. and was no doubt mistaken for a freshening trade—that old, old error. Anyhow, just as the funeral was getting under way, the first squall of full hurricane force burst upon the island and anchorage. It is important to remember that this wind blew from the E.N.E., and so off the land.

In George Town all was confusion. Almost the entire crews of almost all the ships were ashore at the funeral. As soon as they realised what was brewing, captains collected their crews and hurried them to the waterside, to go off to their ships. Captain Eden found his boat, and his men tumbled into her. They shoved off—all in their shore-going clothes—to pull back to the *Bentley;* and that was the last ever seen of them. It is said that on the way out they came up with a small schooner which had parted her cable and was drifting out to sea, and that they were seen to board her to try to save her. If so, they were lost with her. At any rate, they never reached the *Bentley*.

Now, let us see how that ship fared.

The first squall blew the big ensign to ribbons, leaving on the halliards only that part of the fly across which the crepe band was sewn. Her canvas followed. The mate, single-handed, could do nothing; he could only hang on and hope that the rest of her crowd would manage to make their way aboard. The wind was off the land, but the *Bentley*, as has been explained, was lying a long way offshore. So furious was the wind that the land gave little shelter, and a tremendous sea got up, into which the *Bentley* pitched madly, snatching at her cable, brought up at every plunge with a sickening jerk. Something had to go. As ill luck would have it, it was the hawse-pipe. The pipe broke, and the snatching, leaping chain cable now bore full upon her planking. It cut her down to below her water-line as a knife cuts cheese. She filled by the head, settling down in the water until she was quite water-logged, floating only by the buoyancy of her cargo. The added weight was too much for the cable; it parted. Water-logged, soggy, and labouring, with only her mate on board, the *Bentley* drifted off into the murk and fury of the storm.

Several threads are woven into the fabric of this ship's fate. Let us follow one of them.

When the storm struck, a young islander called Ned Parsons hurried down to the waterside. Between the squalls he saw, not far offshore, a couple of his friends struggling to work their little sloop to a place of comparative safety. Parsons looked round for some means of going to their assistance. He saw, lying on the beach, one of the dug-out canoes that in this part of the West Indies goes by the name of a dory (though they bear not the faintest resemblance to the true dory, the flat-bottomed North American fishing boat). It was the usual craft of the type, perhaps twelve feet long, hewn from a single log, and so no more than two feet in beam. Heavy, lacking buoyancy, and incredibly unstable. This particular dory, moreover, was not completely fitted; she had no thwarts or fitted sheer strake. She was being widened; that is, her sides had been sprung apart a few inches and were kept in that position to 'set' by two strong sticks forced in athwartships and temporarily nailed in place. This is important, for those two sticks saved young Ned Parson's life.

He found a paddle, shoved her clear, and started furiously to the help of his friends. Those Cayman Islanders have stout hearts. Ned Parsons, no doubt, knew all about heavy weather, and, no doubt, the water just in the lee of the land was deceptively smooth. He soon learned just what is meant by a wind of hurricane force. A dory of this type has no keel and has no grip of the water. She is difficult to handle in a strong wind. Once clear of the shore the wind picked up Ned Parsons and his cockleshell and flicked them off to leeward like a straw. In spite of furious efforts he was whirled past his objective and hurried, helpless, out to sea.

A canoe of this type has next to no stability. West

Indians handle them with the instinctive, careless ease with which you and I ride a bicycle; but one cannot ride a bicycle up and down the walls and over the roofs of houses without disaster. Moreover, their length, lack of beam and freeboard, and lack of buoyancy in the ends make these small paddling dories poor sea-boats in a sea-way. In a few minutes Parson's dory swamped—and being swamped, of course, lost her last vestige of stability. She rolled over.

Fortunately he was able to grasp the two sticks and drag himself up by them. His head rose underneath the overturned dory, and to his delight and astonishment he found his mouth and nose in air—air imprisoned underneath the dory as she floated upside-down. He spluttered the water from his mouth and nostrils and was able to breathe. After a few moments he struggled clear, righted the dory, and scrambled into her. They went driving on in that raging sea. In a few minutes she went over again, but now he knew what to do. So, sometimes in the dory, more often underneath; half strangled by driving spray, or gulping air with his face pressed close against the dory's bottom in utter darkness with the water lapping his chin, Ned Parsons drifted helplessly to sea.

Another thread. Like Eden of the *Bentley*, Captain Homes of the three-masted schooner *Governor Blake* (also lumber laden) collected his mate, Lloyd Scott, and his crew, and rushed to the waterside as soon as the first squall struck. They were more fortunate than the *Bentley's* people, and actually managed to reach their ship. The boat was hastily made fast alongside, and all hands rushed to change into their working clothes. It may well be imagined that this did not take long, but before they regained the deck the cable parted and the *Governor Blake* was off. They could not possibly hoist in the boat. For a few minutes it towed astern, then the painter parted and it was seen no more. They got the vessel before the wind and drove south and west before the storm under bare poles. It was impossible to get any sail upon her; all they could do was to run before it and see that she did not broach-to. I have before now tried to describe a hurricane. It became a mere wearisome repetition of extravagant epithets. Joseph Conrad tried, in 'Typhoon,' and came closer to the truth than anything else that I have read. I shall not try now. It cannot be done. Let it suffice that for nearly twelve hours the *Governor Blake* ran on before that incredible wind and in a maniac sea.

A well-built sailing vessel, not over-sparred, of two hundred tons or so, not over-laden, is probably the most seaworthy thing afloat—if she has plenty of sea room. Certainly, the *Blake* came through with only superficial damage. Running dead before the wind in a hurricane, however, as she was forced to do, has one almost inevitable consequence. At about midnight, after a final squall of indescribable fury, the wind took off. She had run into the vortex. Released from the pressure of the wind the sea became a nightmare —but there was work to do. "Boys," yelled Captain Homes, "this is our only chance to get the trys'l on her so's we can keep her head to it when it strikes back." They got the trysail on her. A few minutes, and the centre had run past them. The terrible wind leapt at them from the opposite quarter. The first gust, in its fury, tore the top off the after companion hatch. Like a straw in the wind, the hatch was whirled upwards and straight through that new storm trysail. A few whip-like cracks of torn canvas and only the bolt-rope remained. So much for keeping her head to it. As much by good luck as by good seamanship they laid her off before it again and ran on.

After another twelve hours of agony, during which the vessel endured a frightful buffeting, the storm ran past her, and the weary crew were able to take stock of their position.

By great good fortune, no serious damage had been done. The trysail, her boat, and the hatch made up the total of her loss; but the storm had played a trick on them which was destined to have important consequences. When they went to draw fresh water from the tank on deck they found that salt water had got into it and that the whole of it was spoilt. They hoisted sail and headed her back for Grand Cayman.

It was now the second day after the storm. The wind was light and the island was still far away. In the afternoon they sighted a three-master, low in the water and carrying no sail. They made towards her, and before very long recognised the *Frank A. Bentley*. Presently they were able to distinguish a man upon her deck. By the time they were up with her it was late; not much daylight remained. The *Blake* hove-to within hailing distance, and the mate of the *Bentley* explained his situation.

The *Governor Blake* having lost her boat, Captain Homes shouted to the mate of the *Bentley* to put up a light, and promised that he would stand by to take off in the morning. The mate shouted back that the *Bentley's* boat, lashed down a-top the forward deck-house, was undamaged, but that he could not launch it single-handed. If the *Blake* could somehow put a man aboard, he said, together they could get her over. Young Lloyd Scott, mate of the *Blake* and a first-rate swimmer, volunteered to make the attempt. The *Blake* was run past the *Bentley* close by to windward; Scott dived into the sea and swam to the derelict. The *Bentley's* mate helped him aboard; the two men set a light in the rigging, and between them contrived to launch the boat. They rowed over to the *Governor Blake.* As soon as the boat was hoisted in, the *Blake* stood off a little, then hove-to to wait until daylight, for Captain Homes was determined to salve the *Bentley.*

Next morning, at the first gleam of light, Scott, who was in charge of the deck, saw that they had drifted about a mile to the north-west of the *Bentley.* They filled away and bore down upon her. It was still barely light when they came up with her—and they got the shock of their lives. The *Bentley* was still but a dark blur upon the grey water when a sharp-eyed sailor, up forward in the *Blake,* came charging aft yelling that there was a man on the *Bentley's* deck, leaning over the sheerpole of the mizzen rigging. Lloyd Scott, incredulous, put up his binoculars—and saw, quite unmistakably, a dim figure standing there, slumped over the sheerpole just as the man had described. Scott hastily called the Captain. Captain Homes came on deck in a very bad humour. "You're a fine fellow," he sneered at Scott, "to board a derelict and come away without making sure there's no one aboard of her." "What was the sense of searching her," answered the unhappy Scott, "when her own mate was there, been in her for two days, well and uninjured, and swears he's alone in her?" At that moment the *Bentley's* mate came up. "Captain," he said, "I swear there was no living thing in the *Bentley* except maybe a few rats and roaches. I know that everyone went ashore, and I've been all over her since the storm. Whether that's man or devil, he's got aboard her since we left her yesterday evening."

By now the two ships had drawn close together. The light was somewhat stronger and the figure was clearly to be seen. The *Blake* rounded-to with a great slatting of sails and banging of gear. The figure never moved. They hailed him, shouting and bawling to attract attention; he took no notice. "All right," said Captain Homes briskly; "lower the boat, boys. We'll find out what it is we're looking at." Scott looked round. The men were clustered together. Every face was ashy white. Scott himself admits to sharing their uneasiness. In the unreal light of dawn the whole thing was uncanny. Scott called for volunteers. There was no response. "Come," said Scott; "if it's the devil himself, let alone a ghost, I'm not afraid of him. And right now's the time to prove or disprove all this ghost talk. If that d—d ghost—if that's what it is—stays there another fifteen minutes he's going to be brought aboard the *Governor Blake* hogtied—if you boys'll just keep on your feet and do your duty." That fetched them. That phrase was in those days the epitome of a seaman's creed; it was his pride and boast that he could always "keep on his feet and do his duty." They put the boat in the water in quick time, and Scott had to repulse the over-eager seamen. He chose two of them and pulled over to the *Bentley*. As they drew near, Scott hailed the figure. "Hey, how the devil did you get there?" The only answer was a slight movement of the hand and turn of the head. They scrambled over the rail and went up to him. They recognised a fellow islander—Ned Parsons.

Parsons was in the last stages of exhaustion and quite past speaking. They hurried him into the boat and back to the *Governor Blake*, and tended him with all the skill and care of which they were capable. In a few hours he was able to speak, and then he told them a strange tale indeed. After being blown offshore, Ned Parsons managed to hang on through all those terrible hours until the storm had passed him. He just managed to right the dory for the last time, free her of some water and scramble into her, then lapsed, more or less, into a coma. Time passed—he did not know how long. Some time during the night just gone he became conscious of something dark looming not far off. He had a sort of vague notion that it must be land, but he was beyond caring. A little later he became conscious that the dark body was actually hanging over him and that the dory was pounding against something solid. It gradually dawned upon him that the dark mass was the quarter of a vessel. Somehow he managed to reach her deck, and that was all that he remembered.

The *Governor Blake* got a line aboard the *Bentley* and took her in tow. The weather was light; the *Bentley*, water-logged and deep in the water, was a terribly heavy tow. After two days of this the *Blake* had managed to drag her to a point about a hundred miles west of Grand Cayman. The *Blake* was now out of fresh water, and to leeward of her port. She was forced to cast off the tow and make the best of her way to George Town.

Here she replenished her water with the least possible delay, and returned with two other schooners to pick up the *Bentley* again. For two weeks the three schooners scoured the ocean, searching the whole area in which it seemed possible that the derelict might be drifting. In vain. Finally, they came to the conclusion that she must have foundered and reluctantly gave up the search.

That was in August. In November a Norwegian freighter reported in Mobile that she had sighted the *Bentley* one hundred miles south of South Pass, Mississippi. The *Bentley's* owners at once chartered two tugs and sent them out to fetch her in. The tugs hunted round for a week, but found no trace of her. They returned to Mobile, and the general conclusion was that the Norwegian had somehow been mistaken.

Look at the chart. The northern portion of the Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Strait is one of the busiest pieces of water in the world. Here converges most of the traffic from and to New Orleans, Tampa, Pensacola, Mobile, Brownsville, Tampico, Vera Cruz. In 1903 a large proportion of this traffic was in sailing craft, and sailing craft are not confined, as are steamers, to narrow traffic lanes. They cover a much wider expanse of ocean.

In March 1904, early one misty morning, one of the pilots at Matanzas looked out to seaward. Dimly he discerned a three-masted schooner, carrying no sail, dangerously close inshore. Hastily he put off to bring her in. He drew closer . . . very low in the water; a curious look about her altogether. Something familiar . . . then he broke into many Spanish exclamations of surprise.

Unmanned, untended, eluding all pursuit, having passed unseen through some of the most crowded waters in the world—and that with her three masts standing—the *Frank A. Bentley* had arrived to deliver her cargo to the consignees.

AN INDIAN CITY.

BY J. CHARTRES MOLONY.

I LIVE in a village which contains fourteen houses, and sixty-three inhabitants, men, women, and children all told. I am a member of the rural district council, and I am much concerned about the purity of the water from the parish pump, and about manure heaps stacked on the public road before farm labourers' cottages. Twenty-five years ago I lived in a city of over half a million inhabitants, and I was its civic deity, the President of its Municipal Council. It would seem that, residentially and authoritatively, I, with advancing years, am on the down grade.

My far away city was Madras, the pleasantest city of the East. A withered beldame dreaming of ancient fame, said Mr Kipling, who suffered in some degree from 'Punjab head,' and whose eyes were fixed on towns which we Madrasis deem provincial. Calcutta? Poof! We sent Job Charnock to found it, and in his spare moments to develop the idea which founded the British Empire in India. In the seventeenth century no principle was more firmly impressed on servants of the Company than that they should restrict themselves to trade, and give politics and governing the go-by. To old Job meditating the matter it seemed silly to trade under the perpetual handicap of Indian rulers' changing whims, to wear a robe of honour today and be thrown into a dungeon tomorrow. Why not maintain our own police, even our own army, trade securely, live without apprehension? So he wrote to his employers, and so he threw into Indian soil the acorn which has grown into today's mighty oak. Job's three daughters were baptised in Madras in 1689; and Job sent to Madras for the stone ('charnockite') of which his tomb is built. When in the eighteenth century it was a question whether England should pay "rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will," Madras took Robert Clive from his stool in the Company in Fort St George and let him settle the question finally. At Madras in 1753 Clive was married to Miss Maskelyne.

Calcutta and Bombay hold many more inhabitants than Madras; but the student who has an eye for the meaning of figures will shake his head when he considers the figures these cities show. The sexes are entirely out of proportion; men vastly outnumber women. Age periods are likewise out of proportion; the number of people in the prime of life is very great, the numbers at the extremes of youth and age are very small. The meaning is that Calcutta and Bombay attract huge numbers of outside labourers to work for a time in mills and docks, to put by a little if they can, to escape with their lives if they can, then to shake the dust of the cities off their feet, and to return whence they came. Madras is a home, a place where men and women are born, marry, die, and are content.

The name of the city is not really Madras; it is Chennapattinam. An Indian of the South bound for Madras says *pattinattukku pogiren*, which means exactly, "I am going to town." What 'Chenna' means I have never been able to discover: 'Chinna' would mean 'little,' but in Tamil it is practically impossible to muddle up the sounds of E and I. Although, indeed, there would be a certain 'Tamilism' in calling the 'great' city the 'little' city. For the Tamil rather likes to talk in opposites: when he speaks of a 'good' snake, he means a snake that is particularly bad and dangerous.

In extent Madras is huge, because it includes many 'cities.' It lies looking eastward over the Bay of Bengal; and the southern boundary of the city proper is the Esplanade, a broad road running west to east. "Madras," says Dr John Fryer, "then divides itself into divers long streets; these run north and south, and they are chequered by as many transverse." South, considerably south, of the Esplanade stands Fort St George, and the intervening space seems once to have been a graveyard. "The English Golgotha or Place of Skulls presents variety of tombs, walks, and sepulchres, which latter as they stand in line are an open cloyster." Thus Dr Fryer; but on the 'Place of Skulls' now stand the High Courts and the Law College. South of the Fort a magnificent sea-road runs for miles until it ends in the one-time Portuguese 'city' of San Thomé; inland roads connect the city proper with the old 'cities' of Triplicane, Nungambaukam, Mylapore. San Thomé takes its name from Thomas, the doubting companion of Jesus; there is a legend that he came to India and suffered martyrdom on a hill seven or eight miles inland from the coast. That hill is called in English St Thomas' Mount, in the vernacular by words which mean 'the foreigner's hill.' There is a convent on its summit; I have talked with the Mother Superior, an Englishwoman who had lived there for nearly fifty years.

In my University days I was a keen student of metaphysics; and that formed for me a habit of mind which has persisted. Space and Time have no objective existence; they are but 'modes of cognition,' forms in which we human beings must think. And, realising this, I can in a measure dream myself out of Space and Time, and find wonders in my dreams. What is there is also here, what was then is now. As I wandered dreaming through the streets of Madras, strangers, strangely dressed, have tapped me on the shoulder and have walked with me. "I saw them and I knew them all"; whence did they come? Why, they are here and now; only they have shaken off the fetter of Time which still weighs down my limbs.

How strangely different were the conditions of their lives! For when they chose to come to India, the choice for most of them was a final one; they never saw their homeland again. I crossed the sea five times in twenty-five years; there was nothing 'to it' save stepping aboard a floating hotel with the certain knowledge that in a fortnight or so I should be treading European or Indian soil. The men of an older day set out from England hoping that after months and months of wandering round the seas they would reach Indian land; once they had reached it they had little time, inclination, money to tempt Fate upon the deep waters once more. We of today may keep up, keep in repair the structure of British India, but it was the strange old men who walked by my side in dreams that did the building. With our helter-skelter dashings to and fro, could we ever build up anything so strong and enduring?

With how little ceremony and fuss these old ghosts set out on their adventure! I was racked by examiners for a week or ten days; then I was sent to a University for a year's special training; then I was examined again. And I was but going across the road, to be fitted as a little cog-wheel into a smoothly running machine; I cannot flatter myself that my presence made, that my absence would have made, the slightest difference to the machine's running.

One hundred and thirty-six years ago another Irish boy—his name was Frederick Young—took part in the following dialogue.

"What is your age?"

"Fifteen years."

"Are you ready to die for your King and Country?"

"Yes."

"That will do."

So little Frederick sailed for India. When his sister—he and his sister in Ireland corresponded throughout their lives—saw him next, she saw a bronzed and bemedalled General of sixty. In the meantime Frederick had fought with Stamford Raffles in Java, and Rollo Gillespie had fallen mortally wounded into his arms at Kalunga. He had captured a hill fort and had slain the Khan. The Khan left an infant daughter. Young adopted her, and sent her to Ireland to be brought up by his parents; and there she grew up, a dark, beautiful, accomplished girl known as Mary Doon, which I suspect is just the Irish Maire Dhu ('Dark

Mary'). And he had added a mighty force to England's armies in the East. This force was the Gurkhas: Young created them.

In a war against Nepal Young was taken prisoner and carried into Nepal. How long he stayed there, what he did there, is not clear. He was released, he came back to India, he returned to Nepal, he came back once more with three thousand soldiers. He raised them, drilled them, commanded them, fostered them, fathered them. In the present century one of Young's descendants inquired of some Gurkha soldiers in England whether they had any memory of, had ever heard of the old General. And the Gurkhas stared. Remember him; why, what need was there of memory? Every order that he had ever given was on the tip of their tongues. Modern commanders come and go; but it seems that to all eternity old Frederick Young leads the Gurkhas into battle.

It was a less imposing figure that accosted me in Madras, the figure of Mr Stephen Popham. I was walking up his Broadway; Popham's Broadway is an important street which runs northwards from the Esplanade; it must be two miles in length. Dickens, it is said, drew Mr Micawber from his father; if that be so, then Dickens senior was descended in the female line from Stephen Popham.

"This is the last communication, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive From The Beggared Outcast, Wilkins Micawber." So Mr Micawber wrote when behindhand with his rent, and discharged the liability by his own note of hand payable at fourteen days. "He will not lose sight of me until he has laid my fortunes as prostrate here as they are in England; till he strips me of the rags of Character that I had filched from the Humanity of the Settlement." Thus Mr Popham a hundred years or so earlier; he had had a tiff with his employer, Sir John Day. Like Wilkins, Stephen "fell back for a spring"; he started practice as a lawyer in Madras, and undertook, invariably with disastrous results, many labours for the good of his city. He built the Broadway, and covenanted "to keep a clear, clean, and wholesome watercourse for the passage of the Monsoon, without prejudice to any inhabitant." But he got his levels all wrong (surely anyone who knew Mr Popham might have foreseen this), and the Broadway during the monsoon is a sheet of water. Short of unbuilding the Broadway, I could never see any way of setting things right. And the Indian dwellers in the street were philosophical: what had existed for a hundred years and more could very well continue to exist. And, anyhow, these things are in the hand of God.

Near the Broadway was Stringer Street. This took its name from James Stringer, who in 1763 was appointed Master

Bricklayer. I have often wondered what Mr Stringer really did; I cannot suppose that he merely laid bricks. Probably he was some sort of Master Engineer, superintendent of the city fortifications. For the gentleman then responsible for the health of the Fort and of the city was officially styled just 'Chief Scavenger'!

A street which particularly intrigued me was Jones Street. Who on earth was Jones? I never could find out. Like Teufelsdröckh of his father, "often have I fancied how thou wert hamstrung, browbeaten, and bedevilled by the time spirit; till thou hadst nothing for it but to leave in thy street an indignant appeal to the Future." Thou alone surviving, celestial bodyguard of all the Jones that have been or are to be in South India!

I disinterred a worthy named Hamilton; he survives as 'the barber.' The reason for that is curious. Hamilton built a bridge which should keep his name in remembrance. But there is no initial H in Tamil, and a Tamil cannot pronounce the letters L and T unseparated by a vowel. So Hamilton became Amitton, which is a phonetic, if unorthographic, representation of the Tamil word for 'barber.'

Indeed English names take on queer forms in Tamil. The ancestor of a particular friend—let us give his name as Arden—had come down to posterity as 'Liar Arden.' He was not a *liar* in our sense of the word, he was one of the early *lawyers*. And 'lawyer,' as we pronounce it, is not a possible Tamil sound; it comes out as 'liar.' Another Arden seems to have been skilled in treating sick animals; he was the equivalent of today's veterinary surgeon. He survives as *kuthiré* (horse) Arden.

A queer and puzzling habit of the Madrasis was the doubling of the names of streets. There was a big street named formally Manicka Mudaliar Street. But probably no Madras cabman could take a fare to it without inquiry. It was always known as 'Godown Street.' 'Godown' is the Tamil word *gidangu*, which means 'warehouse,' and in this street were the warehouses of the big dealers in piece-goods.

Two other ancient institutions deserve a mention. One is the Kotwal Chavadi, the great market of the city; the other is the Seven Wells. The Seven Wells was (or were) the source of the garrison's water supply. Thereby hangs a tale. A soldier named Sylvester Nicholas performed some feat of daring or fidelity in defending the Seven Wells against the troops of Tippu, and in reward he was appointed Guardian of the Seven Wells, with the right to transmit his office and its emoluments to his descendants. The Nicholas family settled in India; I knew several of them quite well. The eldest, Mr Evelyn St Ormond Nicholas, told me that he was legally entitled to style himself Guardian of the

Seven Wells, and, if he liked, to draw the few shillings of official salary that still attached to the post.

South of the Esplanade and in the Fort lived Mr Streynsham Master. His quarters were 'spatious,' and of a dinner held he records that "at noone we were treated with a very splendid dinner, the Table being spread with about 100 dishes of Meate, well dressed and well sett out." Streynsham was a man who knew how to make his presence felt; when he visited the Company's fort at Masulipatam he took with him "two Members of Council, a Minister, a Surgeon, a Schoolmaster, two Writers, one Ensign, six Mounted Soldiers and a Trumpeter." There is an outcry today in liberal England at the slightest arbitrariness offered by an English official to an Indian. When "Connappa, the Brahmine of the factory," so far forgot himself as to "cast out slighting speeches" about Mr Master, Mr Master simply cast "the said Connappa and his two sons" into the dungeon. And he made them pay 500 pagodas before he let them out!

In my early Indian days there was a conflict between Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener: it ended in the stately withdrawal of Lord Curzon. In 1775 there was a dispute between Lord Pigot, Governor of Madras, and his Council: the Councillors deposed their Governor and sent him into exile at St Thomas' Mount. Lord Curzon returning to England remained for a term of years like Achilles in his tent, and his biography discloses that he was *blessé au cœur*. Lord Pigot took trouble more philosophically; he "had parties and frequently sang after supper with Miss Prime." Unluckily he died in his exile or captivity; the proximate cause is given as "eating remarkably hearty of turtle at Mr Monckton's."

But I must return from the dreamy past. I was President of the Corporation, and at the Corporation's formal meetings all Councillors called me 'Sir.' But the Corporation paid me my salary; I was really their paid servant. That was an odd position. The city was then divided into twenty wards, and each ward elected a councillor. In addition, eight 'institutions' (the railways, the chamber of commerce, and so on) returned eight councillors, and the Government of Madras nominated eight more. I was accounted *ex officio;* I had the right to speak, and I exercised the right freely. We began our sittings at five in the afternoon; and on one occasion a most important and intricate affair was before the Corporation for discussion. I opened the discussion; and I have been told that I gave a clear exposition of a very involved matter. But when I invited the next speaker to give his views, someone said lugubriously, "It's eight o'clock!"

We all sat, a collective Humpty Dumpty, on the rickety legal wall which was the Madras Municipal Act. It often occurred to me, and I often said aloud, that the expense which all Provincial Governments in India might most justifiably incur would be the appointment of first-class legal draftsmen to draft their laws. It may seem a simple thing to write down a law once one has decided what the law is to be: as a matter of fact it is extraordinarily difficult. For a law once formally passed into *Law* must be taken as it stands; if it conflicts starkly with common-sense, why then, so much the worse for common-sense. Our Act ran into hundreds of sections, and two bulky volumes of exposition had been written round it. I thought that I knew those books fairly well. *Sed ex Africa semper aliquid novi:* in other words, the Act could always be relied on to provide a surprise.

I dismissed a municipal servant for what I considered to be gross dishonesty; he retaliated by an action for wrongful dismissal, and he claimed enormous damages. I felt fairly confident of my case; but so, it seems, did he; for the notice of suit was served by a well-known firm of solicitors, and the solicitors briefed Mr Hifees, the most eminent English counsel at the local Bar and a deadly cross-examiner. I drove to Court; and in the entrance hall Mr Hifees, whom I knew quite well in private life, smiled genially at me, but in his smile there was something of the geniality of a tiger contemplating a succulent goat.

"Silence," bawled an usher. We stood up. Sir K. Srinivasa Iyengar, reputed to be the greatest lawyer in South India, entered, bowed, took his seat, and with the aristocratic impassivity of the Brahmin silently turned his eyes towards Mr Hifees.

Mr Hifees gave his gown a forensic twitch. "My case, my lord, is that Mr Molony, President of the City Corporation, has wrongfully and maliciously dismissed my client from his employment."

"That is sad," said his lordship pensively, "but how can *I* help you?"

Mr Hifees stared at him uncomprehendingly. Sir K. (he was always so known) opened the Act. "If you will read section —— of this somewhat peculiar Act, Mr Hifees, you will see that the section places the President outside the jurisdiction of all Courts in dealing with his subordinates. At least, so I read what is written there."

Mr Hifees consulted the section, and seemingly found small comfort in it. "But, my lord, the Legislature can never have intended to say such a thing."

"What the Legislature *intended* to say," rejoined Sir K., "I really do not know. I am bound by what the Legislature *did* say. The suit is dismissed with costs."

Mr Hifees tried an appeal, but with no success. In sense my position was preposterous, in law it was unassailable. Of course I knew that section of the Act, but its incredible meaning in strict law had never dawned on me.

Our most important duty was the supplying of water to the city, and for this supply we charged a water rate. A citizen wrote to me inquiring by what authority water rate had been demanded of him. I replied, "Under the provisions of the Act." As a matter of fact there was no such provision; the draftsman had forgotten it. That citizen was near to a discovery; but presumably he feared to venture further into the jungle of the Act lest some evil beast jump out and bite him. At any rate I did not hear from him again.

The charges of the Tramway Company (an independent undertaking) were fixed by our Act, and there was a scale of charges for carrying dogs, cats, parrots, and such things. That was sensible enough; but the draftsman had gone on to specify the charge for carrying camels and elephants. How would one get one's pet elephant aboard a tram? There was a scale for hand luggage according to weight, with a flat rate for "one ton and over." I liked to picture a city man sprinting for his tram and carrying a ton of coals in one hand.

Of course these absurdities were not of daily occurrence; day in day out, the Act worked quite reasonably well. And in the thirty-six councillors — I except myself as thirty-seventh —there really was a remarkable wealth of talent. Their subsequent careers are proof of this; Muhammad Usman became Governor of the Presidency, the first Indian to hold that exalted position. C. P. Ramaswami became a member of the Executive Council, which is the Indian equivalent of a Cabinet Minister. P. Theagaraja Chettiyar became the leader of a political party which, under a later dispensation, for a considerable while provided the Government of Madras. The Presidency returned T. Rangachariar as its representative in the Legislative Assembly of All India; he speedily established himself as the finest parliamentarian in that Assembly. Medical discoveries have carried the name of Charles Donovan far outside India.

One of our councillors came disastrously into collision with the law. He was a well-known Indian merchant, and he built for himself a fine seaside house in the north of the city. Now there is a 'scour' of the sea running from south to north; but by the time the scour reached Madras its force was more or less spent. In the present century the Madras Harbour, with its great walls running out into the sea, was built; and the scour started anew from the northern wall like a giant refreshed. It scoured the merchant's house into the sea; and he, one would think with every prospect of success, brought a suit. The Courts after prolonged deliberation held that, as building a harbour is a natural and legitimate use of the sea, no one had any right of action arising from that particular usage. This, no doubt, was good law, but it seems to me to be extremely bad sense.

Able though our councillors individually were, there were some collective weaknesses observable amongst them. The Indian has long been accustomed to a despotic form of Government. He submits himself to a personal ruler, or appoints officials and submits himself to them. Naturally he expects such ruler or such officials to accept responsibility for anything that may occur. As an unofficial, elected, governing body, Indians in those days were apt to wilt before criticism, to shuffle off responsibility on to their servants. I often found it difficult to convince the Indian councillors that *they* were responsible for the orders they chose to give; that the City Engineer, the City Health Officer, and I were responsible only for carrying out those orders faithfully. It was also difficult to convince them that they could not bring about the millennium by simply ordering us to bring it about. And the Indian is easily 'stampeded' into panic by nonsense uttered by anyone who is in any way famous, has in any way the public ear. It is very difficult to make him understand that the opinions of a great philosopher, of a facile journalist, on certain practical questions may be utterly absurd.

I have said that our most important duty was to supply water to the city; and here, I think, the Corporation acquitted itself well. But it was difficult to make the councillors realise their own merits, to stand up and defy criticism which might really be superficial or ignorant. A famous American writer described our water supply as foul beyond imagining. The writer, a lady, had got her facts all wrong, she was writing abject nonsense. But the councillors panicked.

As a matter of fact the ideas of the ordinary citizen, even of the well-educated citizen of Europe or of America, on the subject of water supply are usually muddled and mistaken. Water from any abundant source is usually drinkable: it is practically impossible to pollute water in any large quantity by a single, sudden act; and for that reason I have no great fear of our water supplies in this country being suddenly polluted from the air. On the other hand filtration, which satisfies most people, can be very much of a delusion. Slow sand filtration certainly purifies water; but the filtration must be expertly done. I have seen a filtering system which seemingly inspired confidence in everyone; in sober fact that filtration as carried out might have made the water worse, but could not possibly have made it better. Some 'mechanical' filters produce clear, sparkling water, but have no bacteriological effect whatever.

The water supply of Madras came from the great Red Hills Lake several miles outside the city. In former days the water trickled along an earthen channel, and so through pipes into the city as best it might. The total supply was never more than 6½ million gallons per day. The Corporation built a new masonry conduit to a point in the north-west of the city, installed there an immense pumping plant, and delivered the water under pressure. The total supply afforded was nearly trebled. This was a first-rate piece of work.

The pother about the purity of the water supplied arose thus. The Corporation started to build great sand filters; and the water passing through these filters, when scientifically examined, was very pure indeed. But the war put a stop to filter building—there was no money obtainable—and but two courses remained open to the Corporation. One was to restrict the daily supply to what the completed filters could afford; the other to supply unfiltered water with the filtered. The second course in an Eastern city was the better, and was adopted. Of course the scientific purity of the water diminished or vanished, but its practical drinkability was not much affected. It might have been better, but there was no danger attached to drinking it. I drank lots of it myself. But the Indian councillors wilted before the criticisms of persons who probably knew much about their several special businesses, but who assuredly knew nothing about the technicalities of water supply.

Certainly epidemics of water-borne disease (for example, cholera) did now and then occur. But pollution, in my opinion, was 'local' rather than 'general.' A householder (or his servant) draws water from a tap into a vessel scoured with a dirty rag, and allows the water-pot to stand uncovered in a corner for hours. *There* is the source of pollution. A European wrote furiously to me that the filthy water supplied by the Corporation had given his wife typhoid fever. I offered to submit samples drawn from his taps to any test that the King Institute of Tropical Medicine could apply. The tests showed the water to be perfectly wholesome.

It is on the mixing of filtered and unfiltered water that my claim to personal remembrance rests. The witty Sir P. Rajagopalachariar christened our municipal water 'Molony's Mixture,' and the people of the south show no sign of forgetting the name.

We dealt also with cleaning the city, with communications, with public health. And in the first of these matters we were up against another Indian weakness. An administration can do a good deal, but the Indian expects it to do everything. He must not be called upon to co-operate.

We collected refuse just as refuse is collected in every European city; we sent round rubbish carts. In Europe a city is clean because the householders collect their refuse, put it in a container, and hand the container to the cartman. In Madras the people *would not* do this; they would throw their rubbish into the street. So along with an army of cartmen we had to maintain another army of street sweepers. Sometimes the business exasperated me to the pitch of madness. Carts and sweepers would toil up (say) Popham's Broadway; they might be half a mile up the street when householders would emerge and empty buckets of rubbish on to the stretch just swept.

Of course the usual Eastern excuses were advanced. "It is not the custom," "there are some religious scruples," and all the rest of it. "It is your own damned laziness, lack of any social sense," I used to yell at them; "do you think that 3000 sweepers can keep the city clean when 500,000 inhabitants are making it dirty?" This lack of co-operation by the citizen seems to me to be the most dangerous rock in the track of the Indian ship sailing into the sea of self-government. Mr Gandhi, a one-time Indian idol, recommended 'non-co-operation' as a panacea for India's political troubles. 'The Government,' of course, would be responsible for any inconveniences which might arise from the wholesale dislocation of the administrative services, would indeed be bound to ensure that inconvenience accrued only to itself, not to the citizens.

'Communications' scarcely seem to be a subject of interest; yet the communications of Madras awoke in my mind a reflection which I think is interesting. The Indian is apt to complain, and sometimes with justice, of the white man's arrogance. But frequently he complains when he has no real reason for complaint, and keeps silent when complaint would be justified. He seems to be more affected by what he considers to be a personal slight than by a substantial injustice.

Indians complain—some of them have complained to me—of the racial arrogance which debars Indians from membership of certain clubs in India. But surely this is nonsensical. A club is merely an association of private persons whose tastes are more or less the same, who agree to be bound by the same social conventions. The social conventions of Indian and Englishman are entirely different. I do not suggest that one is better than the other; but I do not see how 'club life' is possible between Indians and Englishmen. This is not arrogance; it is simple commonsense. In England a bookmaker does not feel aggrieved because his chance of election to the Athenæum is practically nil; a bishop because he has small prospect of election to the Turf Club. An orthodox Indian will remark blandly that he would be polluted by eating in company with an Englishman; he can hardly expect to join an English club on these terms.

Now I have said that Madras city proper lies north of the Esplanade, and that other 'cities' lie to the south of this line. For the average citizen of Madras the means of communication was the tramway. But between the northern and the southern halves of the city, taken as a whole, lies a wedge of 'anglicised' territory, and through this wedge passes Mount Road, the great 'traffic artery' of the city. European arrogance, which was then dominant, would not allow the trams to pass along this great road. The trams were diverted into narrow back streets; and because of the added distance, and because of the interminable time needed for them to struggle through these streets, the tramway was of little use as a means of communication between north and south. This seemed to me to be an injustice to the whole Indian population; but it was long before I could get Indian support—rather I encountered Indian obstruction — for my views. There was an English shriek of horror when I suggested that tramways should run down the splendid sea-front road to San Thomé; and even an Indian newspaper found the idea 'too democratic.' What did it mean save that the *citizens* were denied free passage through their own city, free access to their own sea? There were bridges on the Mount Road over which the trams could not pass? Well then, rebuild the bridges.

I am glad to think that my ideas did in the end prevail, though I had left the Corporation long before. The bridges have been rebuilt, the trams run straight and quickly from north to south. Whether they have yet reached the sea-road I cannot say. But I am sure that free evening access to the sea would be an inestimable boon to people whose days are passed perforce in dusty, sweltering streets.

Epidemics will occur in Eastern cities. The Indian boasts of his cleanliness, but in sober truth his standards, at any rate of communal cleanliness, are far below those of the European. I have known many qualified medical men in England who have never seen an actual case of cholera, smallpox, bubonic plague. I have seen dozens, probably hundreds, of such cases.

I remember that once cholera, smallpox, and plague were raging in Madras, and our Health Officer prepared an address to the people for me to sign. It dealt with the danger of infection. "But if all this is true," I said, "how is it that you and I are alive? We haven't been *out of* the range of infection for the last three weeks."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm inclined to attribute a sense of justice to God. He looks after us because we're bound to be there. He won't be bothered with fools who rush into infection, or won't take the trouble to avoid it." That was a typically Indian point of view, and in my opinion not a bad one.

Bubonic plague is no particular danger to anyone who has a bit of common-sense. But pneumonic plague is a different matter. "I have never known a patient recover," said the Health Officer, "and I have never known a nurse who nursed a case escape alive. And I have never known a nurse refuse duty!" What heroism of womankind was summed up in those few words! We had *one* case of pneumonic plague in my time in Madras. A nurse took the case without a second's hesitation. The patient died—and so did the nurse.

Our Health Officer—his name was Dr Kaivar Raghavendra Rao—was a brilliant man in his profession. But the Lord had made him like Zaccheus; he was short of stature. He was, so far as I remember, 4 ft. 11 in. And then, as the work of the department expanded, we engaged a lady Health Officer, Dr (Miss) Vira Singh. "What is she like?" I inquired of Raghavendra on the morning after her arrival, and I understood him to say that she was "a sharp person."

"A sharp person! What does that mean?"

"No; a *shart* person. Like that"—he measured with his hand.

"Shorter than yourself?"

"Oh yes; much *sharter*."

Against Miss Vira Singh the denizens of a slum once made a complaint; it was written in English by the bazaar scribe: "She urges us to practise sanitation which is inconvenient, and walks in an emphatic fashion with her boots." The first part of the complaint I could understand, but the second baffled me. I sought counsel of Raghavendra. "It means that when she is sitting down, and when she is annoyed by stupidity, she rattles her feet on the floor." She walks in an emphatic fashion with her boots!

I draw out of the present and into the past once more. I have said that south of Madras city proper lie the 'cities' of Mylapore and Triplicane. But the official southern boundary of Madras is even farther away; it is the Adyar River. That may be considered a sensible or a preposterous boundary according as one looks at it. Sensible, because it allows great room for expansion; preposterous, because to serve a few houses on the river-bank miles of roads, of water and drain pipes, of electric cable must be laid. But the Adyar houses are fascinating; they are the palaces of the old Anglo-Indian 'Nawabs.'

This palace building, to be sure, did not meet with the approval of John Company in London. "If it is merely to gratify the folly and vanity of merchants in having the Parade of Country Houses and Gardens, we think that these are Distinctions which belong only to our Governor and the Principal Persons."

Little the 'Nawabs' cared for these admonitions. Moubray, who lived in the eighteenth century, built the magnificent house which is now the Adyar Club, a huge building of spacious rooms, surmounted by a great white cupola on the roof. And the road which leads to it from the city is called by Moubray's name. There is a splendid terrace overlooking the river, and the grounds—they really form a park—fit in easily a riding track, several tennis courts, and a golf course. And yet this is but a fraction of old Moubray's possessions. In his riverside estate were built—whether he or another did the building I cannot say—Beachborough, Ben's Gardens (who, I wonder, was 'Ben'?), Adyar House. Each one of these would rank as a country mansion in England. There is the same spaciousness and stateliness in Daylesford, the house on the Cotswolds which Warren Hastings built for himself in his retirement. I have entered Daylesford Park a couple of times, and have tried to call up in my mind a picture of the old man there awaiting his end. Poor fellow, he had to endure seven long years of impeachment and obloquy. Who would wish to buy his glory at the price he paid for it?

They were curious men, these Nawabs of an older day; they lived at one extreme or at the other. It is a mistake to imagine that every servant of the Company in India was very rich: Professor Dodswell, whose knowledge of that period is unequalled, has shown that the majority of them were very poor indeed. But some flourished like the green bay tree; and I suspect that they flourished because they were extremely dishonest. Mr Richard Mohun of the seventeenth century was dismissed the Company's service: he brought a suit for wrongful dismissal, and he estimated his losses at £100,000. His official salary was £100 *per annum!* "Just as it is impossible not to taste the honey which finds itself on the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for the Government servant not to eat up at least a bit of the King's revenue." Thus the sage Kautilya writing many, many hundred years ago. I fear that Moubray, Mohun, and others like them ate up 'at least a bit' of that which rightfully belonged to their employers.

I end with a story of a modern merchant prince, though indeed a prince who never laid by much store for himself. Probably few outside his immediate business friends in England have heard his name, and I doubt whether his personal name will be remembered in India. For one thing, it is a difficult name for the Indian to say; for another, it is merged in that of a firm which is centuries old.

He controlled large factories in Madras, and in them employed, I suppose, 11,000 hands. Bit by bit he pulled down the cruelly long Indian hours of work to about the level of working hours in England; bit by bit he increased wages until they stood in no relation to what they were when he started. He told me a curious fact about this. "I soon found out that mere raising of wages didn't do any good. These poor devils had been sunk in slavery for so long that they didn't *want* high wages, didn't know what to do with them. If by two days' work they could earn a bare subsistence for the week, they wouldn't come to work for the next four days. I had to teach them to spend before I could teach them to earn." So he housed them, built the finest schools in South India for their children, gave them clubs and cinemas. In a sense it came back to him: no workmen in India can do the work which his well-paid, comfortably housed workmen can now do.

I have a sad memory of the last time that I saw him. He was, in outward appearance, an old broken man, though he was not really much older than I am now. "It was his young days in a Lancashire mill that broke him," his wife—she, too, is dead—said to me; "and he vowed that if ever he controlled men he would never see them treated as he was treated himself." Certainly he kept that vow.

THE ALGEBRAIC SCHOOL OF MODERN POETRY.

BY GUY BOAS.

MODERN poetry in the early years after the War showed signs of becoming so excessively modern that not even the modernists could understand or control it. Not that that mattered, since it was the boast of your pukka modernist that it was neither necessary to understand the poetry he admired, nor desirable to control it. We had all of us had quite enough discipline during the War; and now Art was going to demonstrate the joys of freedom. As for intelligibility, in order to write coherently or to comprehend what was written, one had to think, and thinking was a form of undesirable discipline. Feeling was all that mattered. So long as the poet felt deeply—whether the depth of his feeling was prompted by love or absinthe we were not to inquire—he had his right to an audience, and so certain would he be to communicate his important emotions to his readers out of the flaming integrity of his soul that no one had any right to exact from him a definition of what precisely he was talking about.

So arose what in future textbooks may be known as the Unintelligible School of Poetry, practised by some poets with sincerity, because they really could not write coherently, and by others, either because they would not take the trouble to do so, or because they saw a good opportunity of making a name by supplying what an affected and neurotic market demanded.

All this was very natural. The bonds of 1914-1918 were loosened: the harness, with its almost intolerably tight bearing-rein, was removed, and hung up—we hoped—for ever. Little wonder was it if Pegasus kicked his heels in the air, and set off on a gallop which had more of ecstasy in it than sense of direction.

The New Poetry which broke out in 1918 was distinguished by three characteristics. One feature was harshness of subject-matter and language, with which poets such as Mr Siegfried Sassoon had made us familiar some time before the War ended. While the War was still young Julian Grenfell wrote "Into Battle," which for suavity of style and loyalty to a traditional conception of the glory of soldiership might have been written by Lord Tennyson in the verdant security of the Isle of Wight; but by 1917 Sassoon had written "In the Pink," "They," and "Does it Matter?—Losing your Legs," in which he said things about the conduct of the War by our Generals and the sermons preached on it by our Bishops which were neither suave nor loyal, and other matters were mentioned which were in keeping neither with orthodox patriotism nor orthodox poetry :—

" The Bishop tells us : ' When the boys come back
They will not be the same ; for they'll have fought
In a just cause.' . . .
' We're none of us the same ! ' the boys reply.
' For George lost both his legs ; and Bill's stone blind ;
Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die ;
And Bert's gone syphilitic ; you'll not find
A chap who's served that hasn't found some change.' . . ."

It is true that such poems were forgotten as speedily and decently as possible in the triumph of victory, and anthologists hastened to commemorate the martial muse of Mr Sassoon by including nothing but "Everyone suddenly burst out singing" in their collections. But "They" and "In the Pink" had done their work. They might have been forgotten by the public, but they were not forgotten by the poets, who proceeded to treat the problems of Peace—social, political, industrial, economic, philosophic, and religious—with the same candour and bleakness with which Sassoon had dissected life and death in dug-outs. Prominent among post-war poems which caught this style was Mr T. S. Eliot's "Waste Land," in which post-war mentality was depicted as hardly less unsavoury than Mr Sassoon's trenches.

The second characteristic of New Poetry, mercifully not always, but sometimes practised, is sheer unintelligible incoherence.

" 43 O the Time is 5
44 I do !
45 For it's the hoo-doos, the somethin' voo-doos
46 And not Kings onelie, but the wisest men
47 Graue Socrates, what says Marlowe ?
48 For it was myself seemed held
49 Beating—beating—
50 Body trembling as over an hors d'œuvres—
51
52 And the dream ending—Dalloway ! Dalloway—
53 The blind portals opening, and I awoke ! "

—From " Poem Beginning ' The ' " by Louis Zukofsky.

Whether this sort of thing means anything positive to its author no one but the author can say. But that it is impossible for anyone else, either by dissection, psycho-analysis, or mental X-ray, to make anything out of it is certain, and if anyone claims to be able to do so, let him be adjured to discard affectation and be warned against talking sickly.

Such verse may have something in it, for otherwise how could it have achieved print ? It may possess a mad music which appeals to perverted senses as jazz rhythms appeal to unstrung nerves; it may possess some occult symbolic quality such as is claimed for surrealist pictures, in which case it may justify its appearance merely by being novel, since no one has ever dared or thought it worth while to be novel in that particular, outrageous way before. It might also be claimed that New prose equally startling has been printed by authors of such repute as Mr James Joyce, Miss Gertrude Stein, Mr Passos, and Mr Rodker.

> "Pepep. Pay bearer, sure and sorry, at foot of ohoho honest policist. On never again, by Phœnis, swore on him Lloyd's, not for beaten wheat, not after Sir Joe Meade's father, thanks! They know him, the covenanter, by rote at least for a chameleon at last in his true falseheaven colours from ultraviolent to subred tissues. That's his last tryon to march through the grand tryomphal arch. His reignbolt's shot."—From 'Work in Progress' by James Joyce.

If prose, vehicle for lucidity and justice, can be seriously regarded when written in this vein, why not poetry which has always been allowed poetic licence? And have not Blake and Edward Lear written nonsense which is now regarded as of high poetic quality? Whatever substance these arguments have in them, the lyra lunatica type of poetry may claim anything it likes except one thing—it cannot claim to make sense. If you are satisfied with poetic nonsense, such verse may please you, but if you want poets to be intelligible you must go elsewhere.

A third type of modern poetry is characterised by evasiveness. The lines and stanzas are not in themselves unintelligible, and yet the total impression left is wholly obscure. Browning's obscurity is caused by the over-nimbleness of his intellect, the recondite nature of many of his themes, together with a plethora of thought which, clamouring for expression, results, as in passages in the last plays of Shakespeare, in what Humpty-Dumpty called 'portmanteau language.' The obscurity of the Evasive School of poets is due to quite other causes. It is not their mental make-up which makes them evasive, they deliberately mean to be. It is not that their themes are recondite: as often as not they surpass Wordsworth in choosing commonplace subjects, but the more prosaic the theme the more evasively they treat it. They suffer not from plethora of thought but from plethora of fancy, so that they cannot describe the simplest or most elemental thing without linking it to some outrageous image.

"The sea is an acre of dull glass, the land is a table
My eyes jump down from the table and go running down as far as
 they are able
While one is still young and still able to employ
Nerves muscles sinews eyes mouth teeth head
A giant that threw a stone at Caerodunum

Transforming England into a salty pancake
Lichen-alive governed in gametosporous colonies
Crescented with calciform corollæ, a great stone marsh
With the dragons of dead Hercules debating
There is no end there is no end to the labours of Hercules
While one is still young and still able to employ
Feet fist eyes in the head a spade a spanner
Down down we go down the emblematic abyss
Adorned with the kisses of the gentry, come out on primrose day
To greet the Young Bolshevik Bolus rolling up with banners
Across the passes of snake and ladder country
Idly I flung down pieces, but the fit is ended
When one was wery young and able to employ
The empty salads of English advent and the formulæ of seajoy."

This poem, entitled "Lusty Juventus," is by Mr Charles Madge, and is included in 'The Faber Book of Modern Verse.' A first reading of the poem brings no sense of meaning, though an impression is left of a distinguished choice of words and a power of telling phrase—even if it tells nothing. No classical dictionary—at least none on my shelves—includes *Caerodunum* among its information. Nor does the Oxford Dictionary include the word *gametosporous* (though the root *gamete* is suggestive). Dictionaries are therefore not going to help us. Either our available dictionaries are not sufficiently up to date, or we are in the language world of *The Jumblies* or *The Jabberwock*. We are therefore thrown back, as no doubt the poet thinks we should be, on our own powers of intuitive sympathy or clairvoyant perception. The title at any rate is a pointer—"Lusty Juventus." The poem is about the vigour of youth. Granted that the poet refuses to express himself precisely, he cannot blame us if, shutting our eyes, anæsthetising our brain, and opening the pores of our literary senses to any vague impression which may gather into them from the verbal ether, we induce, each of us for himself, a subjective impression of what the writer is intending to convey. Having entered into this hypnotic state, a condition of reading equivalent to that in which Coleridge wrote "Kubla Khan," my own reception of the poem is as follows: When we Englishmen are young and full of a vigorous instinct to use our physical powers in healthy exercise, we are shut up in the arid classrooms of Public Schools where we are taught an endless succession of dull academic facts about classical mythology, and are also forced to learn the formulæ of science. Thus made effete by our refined traditional relatives who come down to see us on gala days ("Adorned with the kisses of the gentry, come out on primrose day"), we emerge under the unthinking banner of Conservatism to encounter the highly explosive opposition of intelligent Communism. This condition of mental inertia was all very well when one was 'wery young,' such empty formulæ satisfied and deceived one then; but we wake up when we emerge into the world to realise that our education has been a mere emasculating of our vital powers, and either as an occupation of youth-time or a preparation for later life we discover that it will not wash.

Such ideas, so far as I can collate them, the poem conveys to *me*. But it would not surprise me in the least to be told by the author that nothing I have understood had he any intention of saying, while, if a hundred other readers studied the poem, I should expect them to imbibe a hundred different messages.

Here, therefore, is a new phenomenon in the history of English poetry. Certain poets in former ages have been considered obscure, such as the metaphysical school of the seventeenth century, and to some degree, in our own time, the author of "The Testament of Beauty." But no poets of reputation have, until this generation, proved wholly incomprehensible even to that section of the public which is accustomed to reading and enjoying poetry and which is by no means unwilling or unequipped to keep up with the fashions. Yet that is the situation today. We are able to understand, and to be understood by, Victorian poets, Elizabethan poets, poets who lived hundreds of years ago called Homer and Euripides, Virgil and Ovid and Catullus, who neither spoke our language nor knew our civilisation; yet when one of our own English contemporary poets addresses us, who lives, it may be, round the corner, drives the same make of car as we do, attends the same concerts, takes the same size in gas-masks—when *he* speaks to us we can neither take his meaning nor enjoy his music. As well might he speak to us in Chinese; better indeed, for if we took the trouble to learn Chinese we should then be able to understand him.

What answer would the modern poet himself give in justification, or at least in explanation, of this paradox? In all probability he would claim that he did not wish or intend to be understood in the particular. His poetry is algebraic, not arithmetical. Writing from and to the subconscious, he is concerned with all his subject rather than with any one concrete aspect of it. A very able exposition of the meaning of *Ballad* by Mr Auden ("O what is that sound which so thrills the ear Down in the valley drumming, drumming?") is given along these lines by Mr Martin Gilkes in his 'Introduction to Modern Poetry.'

> "What actually happens as we read is simply this: after the first two lines we pass straight from the particular to the general. Or, in other words, our story is not concerned with any particular pair of human beings or any particular body of soldiers (hence we do not need names or labels for precise identification); but it covers any

—and every—united pair, mother and child, husband and wife, lover and mistress; and it covers any and all who follow the trade of war."

In several pages of lucid prose Mr Gilkes brings meaning to *Ballad*, but whether it is also Mr Auden's meaning is not clear; nor, according to Mr Gilkes, does that matter. The only thing certain is that if Mr Gilkes's is also Mr Auden's meaning, it is supplied not by Mr Auden but by Mr Gilkes. Does this mean that poets in future must have their interpreters, like statesmen who cannot speak one another's language at a conference? Must readers of poetry sit surrounded by dictionaries and encyclopædias and hand-books of quotations and allusions if they are to enjoy a New Poem? And must they bring the qualities and qualifications of the expert psycho-analyst and surrealist to bear on modern poetry if they are to taste its delights?

To answer these questions we must consider candidly of what the public for poetry consists. There is the professional public, who read poetry either because they write it, write about it, or teach it, and there is the amateur public who read it merely because they enjoy it. The latter public, if poetry were doing its job, should exceed the professional public in proportion as the audience in a theatre exceeds in number the playwrights, actors, and critics. In Sophoclean and Elizabethan days the size of the amateur public was probably the popular size it should be; the sales of Alexander Pope and Lord Tennyson also prove that they were adequately listened to. But when the modern poet complains that he cannot make a living out of poetry, is it any wonder when he insists on providing an article which differs so defiantly in kind from anything that our poets have offered to us before?

Poets, like orators, may be divided into those who have something to say and those who have to say something. Poetry, as practised from the days of Homer, is an old and comprehensively exploited art, and the remark of Mr Hales of Eton that if anyone said something new he would be prepared to show that it had already been said better by Shakespeare is a challenge with a reasonable warning. Except, therefore, in the case of a consummate genius, who will always be able to put old wine successfully into new bottles, there is clearly a temptation for new poets to justify adding their voices to a choir already large by singing, not new songs in the old style, but old songs in a new style; and if the new style involves a method of voice-production which is ugly and bizarre compared with the old one, at any rate it is likely to command attention, and many an artist prefers to be abused rather than to be ignored.

Music, which is a much newer art than poetry, does not provide the same excuse. European composers only began saying really great things in the eighteenth century. Homer died about 2700 years ago, but it is not two hundred years since the death of John Sebastian Bach. Yet, even in music, and in spite of the continually developing resources of the modern orchestra, composers, feeling that the classical modes of expression have been exhausted, are striking out for novelty by means of harmony and counterpoint which fifty years ago would have been damned as cacophony. Even at the present time music is being written in a key so different from the diatonic and chromatic scales which served Bach and Beethoven and Wagner and Elgar that a listener unaccustomed to its progressions finds it as incomprehensible as an unknown language. If music, therefore, in the first few hundred years of its history, is in this empiric condition of growing-pains, what wonder is it if poetry, after nearly three thousand years of the old tunes, is reaching out for a change?

The comparison, however, may be fallacious in a respect which the Modern poet would do well to consider. Who can be certain that European music in the short period that has elapsed since its birth has had time to find its feet, and to determine its ideal idiom? The Wagner who was hissed in 1845 was already canonised by 1865; who can say that 'Wossek,' which caused a storm of protest when it was broadcast in 1937, may not in 1957 be regarded with the same patronising tolerance with which we now regard 'Butterfly' or 'Traviata'? But when the poet is up against a tradition of three thousand years, the immensity of the period cuts both ways. We may be over-ripe for a change, or on the other hand, a change may be as absurd as asking man, who for so long has walked upright, to walk on all fours, or suggesting that it is high time that fishes should learn to fly and birds to live under water. "If you try to write poetry in a way that was not Homer's way or Shakespeare's way," remarked Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, "you are not very likely to succeed." And that is the warning which one has a right to give to the Algebraic Poets. They *may* succeed in making good, they *may* be introducing us to the threshold of a new poetic era, a step forward into a brave new world of unexplored and illimitable possibilities: time alone will show. On the other hand, they may only be wasting our time and theirs in leading us up a blind alley, floored with crazy pavement, flanked by grimy walls, screened from the pure air by smoke and fog, and to enter which produces not a feeling of poetic exaltation, but only claustrophobia and despair.

The way the world is wagging at the moment suggests that not only the times are out of joint, but that the world is in danger of dislocating its heart. Machinery seems engaged in tilting our civilisation to an obscene angle at which any moment it may fall down and break itself to pieces. Philosophy seems stretched upon a rack by the Frankenstein of modern Science, who answers any attempt to soften him with human reasoning by mere inhuman vociferation, by the whirring engines of bombing aeroplanes, by the hissing of poison-gas cylinders, by the thunder of high-explosive, and—even in peace-time—by the soul-destroying gyration of factory wheels, which drives humanity from the clean air and the green fields which were their divine birthright into that industrial Black Hole of Calcutta which appears to be their civilised inheritance.

Perhaps the modern poet claims that if this is the way the world is going, it is his business to follow, and he is bound to tilt his lyre to the angle—however uncomfortable—of the era in which he lives. But it is the business of art to look below the surface of things. And it is a superficial artist who mistakes the scars on the flesh for the hall-mark of the soul. If man destroys his civilisation, the Creator is not going to play the same fool's game with the universe. Let Europe, Asia, and the New World, bomb themselves to pieces, yet there is still a saner Lawgiver than man who will see that His edifice, more immutable and more important than London, Berlin, New York, or Paris, shall still remain worthy of attention, admiration, and music.

"Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens through Thee are fresh and strong."

So let the Modern poet lift his eyes higher than factory sky-scrapers, and let him listen for the silence that follows the whirlwind in which a voice more impressive than that of high-explosive may be heard speaking. And if he then sets himself to record what he sees and hears—sights and sounds found worthy of music by poets since the world began—he may to his surprise discover that he has no need of a new technique with which to express himself. He may suddenly find his own voice as fresh and strong as the most ancient heavens, and if he does not recognise, or refuses to recognise, what Power has made it so, he will not be the first who has been caught worshipping, like the Athenians of old, at the altar of "The Unknown God."

BOS CAFFER.

BY SIR HUBERT OSTLER.

THERE has been endless controversy among the big-game hunters of Africa about which is the most dangerous animal. Some give their vote to the elephant, some to the lion, but most seem to give the palm to the African buffalo (*bos caffer*). Certainly many hunters of experience have been killed or injured by the buffalo, and at close quarters he is a difficult animal to stop, owing to his size, determination and speed, and, in spite of his bulk, the difficulty in finding a spot to shoot at which will check him. He protects all vital spots by the way he carries his head when charging. The head is held low and completely covers his chest from an off-hand shot. His forehead is partly protected by the broad bases of his bullet-proof horns, and his nose is pushed forward so as to foreshorten the small vital spot under the horns into a small and uncertain mark. When he is charging, no bullet will stop or turn him unless it knocks him off his feet. That is what makes a charging buffalo at close quarters such a dangerous beast; for if he reaches his enemy he shows no mercy. He is not content to toss or gore him and pass on. Once he has a man down, he will trample and gore him into a pulp before leaving him.

But I think it must be acknowledged that only a wounded buffalo is really dangerous. Unwounded buffaloes have never been known to make an unprovoked charge. The so-called charges of herds are panic attempts to escape from the sight, or more often from the smell, of man. A herd will start off at full gallop with amazing suddenness, and if the buffaloes should happen to be headed in the direction of the hunter it may look like a charge. But at sight of him they will sheer off or change direction to avoid him. I have never heard of an authentic case of a charge by a herd or by a lone buffalo unless wounded. There are instances indeed of an unprovoked charge by a single buffalo, but only when it has been wounded by someone else, or mauled by a lion, and under the smart of its injuries it is then in a vindictive mood.

The great field naturalist Selous, who had vast experience and roamed over Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia for years before 1892 when the murrain of rinderpest almost exterminated the species, and during the time that buffalo teemed in their hundreds of thousands, gave it as his opinion that the buffalo was harmless unless wounded. The old bulls, which often herded together, no doubt for mutual protection against lions, were bold and often inquisitive. So long as they did not get his wind they would stand while he approached, and often trot towards him in order to get a better view. But he never experienced an unprovoked attack, and in the course of many years he must have encountered thousands of the species. Selous, while admitting that a wounded buffalo at close quarters is a dangerous animal, had no hesitation in classing the lion as the most dangerous of African big game; and although I have not had sufficient experience to make my opinion of much value, I am inclined to agree with him.

The rinderpest, which from 1888 to 1893 travelled through Africa from Somaliland almost to the Cape, decimating most of the larger species of antelope, almost exterminated the buffalo. But nature, if left alone, however hard it may be on individuals, provides for the survival of species. Here and there an individual is found to be immune, or recovers from the disease. But the buffalo seem to have been especially singled out as victims of that plague, and so few survived that for many years they were hardly able to hold their own, and it looked for a time as though the species might well become extinct.

The war helped them to recover; for all hunting for sport ceased for four years, and although a large amount of game was shot in East Africa for food throughout the war area, the buffalo, having taken to thick cover and having become almost nocturnal in its feeding habits, did not suffer much molestation. Ever since the war they have continued to increase, in some parts to such an extent as to become a nuisance. In Uganda especially, the Game Department is faced with the problem of how to diminish their numbers; for they are spreading over parts of that country so rapidly that they have become a menace to natives by reason of the damage they do to their crops.

When first I went to North-Eastern Rhodesia, in 1920, although the buffalo had not become numerous enough to spread over the whole territory, the scattered herds had become large, they were prospering, and rapidly increasing in numbers. The animals were also particularly large and heavy, with finer heads than in most parts of East Africa. The greater rainfall in Northern Rhodesia no doubt means more and better food. Owing to the artificial manner adopted of measuring buffalo heads by taking the greatest spread, not many record heads have come from these parts, for the horns are apt to turn inwards. But if heads were measured by length and breadth and weight of horn, I think Rhodesian horns would compare favourably with all others.

It is reiterated again and again in the books written by hunters that a wounded buffalo when followed will swing round in a circle on to his tracks and wait quietly beside them for the following hunter. But such a statement attributes altogether too high a power of reasoning to the beast. Every lone buffalo has learned that when it desires to rest it is a wise precaution to make a circle before lying down, and in doing so it often comes to rest close to its own tracks. But it has not the reasoning power to consider whether it is likely to be followed, and to adopt this strategem in order to surprise its pursuer. The precaution is taken to guard against being taken by surprise. A large number of old bulls become worsted in fight by more vigorous rivals, and having been turned out of the herd live solitary lives. On a number of occasions I have followed the spoor of these lone bulls, and the distance they will travel in a morning and the erratic way in which they will wander out of their main course are surprising. I have several times found the fresh track of a buffalo and walked from ten to twelve miles before coming up with him. But the general direction is always into the wind, and to that extent the hunter has the advantage. In every case I found that before lying down (as they do in the heat of the day) the beast had walked in a circle with a diameter of some forty yards, and had lain down somewhere close to his own track. Sometimes he was so close that as we passed along it he would hear or see us before we saw him, and he would be on his feet and away in a split second. Sometimes he lay far enough off not to be aware of our passing, but as we followed his track round the circle he would suddenly get our wind, and then we would hear a mighty crashing as he made off through the light forest. Although Chifula, my gun-bearer, was a perfect tracker, not once did I succeed in surprising a buffalo which had once lain down, because of its invariable habit of first travelling in a circle. I am convinced that it is this more or less instinctive behaviour which has given rise to the mistaken belief that a wounded buffalo circles on to his own track in order to catch his human pursuer unawares. The result is, however, often the same as though cunningly planned. The wounded buffalo, angry and vindictive with pain, comes to rest so near his own spoor that he hears and sees his pursuers and immediately attacks, springing from the ground into a full gallop. Many a hunter has been undone by the suddenness and unexpectedness of such an attack. A herd of buffalo, on the other hand, relies on its numbers for protection, and I have never known them make a circle before lying down.

The amazing quickness with which a buffalo can spring from the ground and start at full speed has to be seen to be believed. I remember the first herd of buffalo I ever followed. It was a small herd of about twenty, but the spoor was clear, and we walked along it at four miles an hour for three hours before coming up with them. They were lying down in thick shade, and through blinding sunlight it was difficult to make the beasts out in the black shadow. The wind being right, I crept up to within some thirty yards, and had a good look at them from behind an ant-hill. They were mostly cows and calves, and for some time I could not pick out a warrantable bull. At length I spotted one, but he was lying in such a way that all vital spots were covered by intervening saplings. Chifula was imploring me to shoot, saying that they would get our wind and be off. But I did not want my first buffalo to be a wounded one, and I determined to wait, thinking that even if they did get our wind I should have time for a shot at him as he rose. Meantime I stood keyed up to the highest point of readiness with a double 450 - 400 in my hands and watched the bull quietly dozing. Then what Chifula had feared happened. An eddy in the wind gave the herd the taint of man. The bull sprang from the ground into full gallop, and I only had time to throw the rifle up like a gun and take one snap shot as he disappeared. I missed him completely, and saw the bullet cut a branch just above his back. He was gone before I could get in a second shot, and it required a long stern chase before I got up to him again.

Since the buffalo is a heavy-skinned, tough beast, it is advisable to tackle him not only with a heavy rifle, but also with solid bullets. Soft-nosed bullets, even with a fairly heavy rifle, have not sufficient power of penetration. So thick and massive is an old bull that even a solid bullet will not as a rule go right through him, though once or twice I have found one just under the skin on the far side, all its energy having been expended in the beast. I have shot eight buffalo with solid bullets from a ·318 rifle, and in each case one shot was sufficient to kill it cleanly and quickly, but then I was near enough to put the bullet in a vital spot. I myself prefer a heavier rifle, but the 450-400 or the ·404 magazine, which has the same ballistics, is quite heavy enough. Indeed in my opinion the ·404 magazine is the ideal heavy game rifle, good enough for anything that walks in Africa, and it has the advantage of lightness, being under nine pounds. The late Sir Alfred Sharpe, who in early life was a professional elephant hunter and later became a British official in Nyasaland, rising eventually to become its Governor, shot more elephants than most men. Elephant hunting remained his hobby until he was well past his seventy-fourth year. He tried every heavy rifle made, and came to the conclusion that the ·404 was the best. The Game Department of Uganda has to shoot 2000 elephants every year in order to keep the number from increasing so as to be a menace to the natives, and this is the rifle which, after full trial and report by the most experienced elephant hunters in the world, it has issued to its rangers.

Many stories have been told which illustrate the vindictive and determined nature of a wounded buffalo, but although I have shot a number I have not had any personal experience of it. With my heart in my mouth, on one occasion I did follow one into long grass; but, after travelling only a short distance, to my great relief I found him dead. But some of my hunting friends have had close calls, and one, a scion of a famous family, was killed by a buffalo. He had lost an arm in the war, but could still do most things as well as a man with two arms, and thought nothing of tackling dangerous game. My hunting companion in 1920, whom I shall call M., had a close call one day which I did not see, but I was near enough to hear his shots. We were looking for a herd of buffalo which we were told would be found in one or other of two valleys. M. took one and I took the other. I soon found by the spoor that they had been feeding in my valley during the previous night, and followed it in high hopes of coming up with the herd. After a bit the separate tracks drew together, and the spoor indicated that the herd had joined up in the early morning, and had started off for the other valley. As I followed them I heard three shots in quick succession, and then, after a short interval, two more. We were pressing on following the spoor when Chifula suddenly made an exclamation, and pointed to the tracks of M. and his two boys. They had cut the spoor at that point ahead of us and had followed it, making it fairly certain that the shots we had heard had been at the buffalo we were following. We hurried on and soon came on M. and his gun-bearer. Lying on the ground were three bulls with splendid heads, one of them as good as I have ever seen. M. had followed the herd until he espied it standing in the shade. He crept up to within seventy yards, picked what seemed the best head, and fired. The bull fell, and the rest of the herd, not knowing where the shot came from, set off at a gallop straight towards the spot where M. was standing. It looked like a deliberate charge, and his boys immediately shinned up the nearest tree, leaving M. alone to face it. He was carrying only a ·318 magazine rifle. He worked his bolt and took a shot at a bull that was making straight for him. The bullet found a vital spot, for the beast fell about thirty yards from him. But behind it was another bull, which came tearing along towards him. He just had time to work his bolt and fire. He again found a vital spot, and had time to jump aside as the third bull sprawled along the ground at his feet. It was good shooting to get three with three shots from a fairly light rifle, but there was a great element of luck in it, too. The first bull was stone dead with one shot. He used the last two I had heard to finish off the others, though both were mortally wounded and unable to rise. There was great rejoicing in the camp that night, and many songs in honour of the prowess of the *bwana*, while the titbits sizzled in the ashes and the long strings of meat slowly turned black on the frames built over the fires. Not one ounce of those mountains of meat was wasted.

Two New Zealand friends of mine who subsequently hunted in Northern Rhodesia had a miraculous escape from a buffalo. They were hunting together and wounded a bull, which made off through the forest. They took up the spoor and followed it, exercising all the caution they could to guard against a surprise attack. The tracks led them out into a *dambo*, off which for a width of half a mile the grass had recently been burned. The burnt area was bare of vegetation but studded with small ant-hills, none of which was more than three feet high. Beyond the burnt patch was a large belt of unburned grass nine feet high. Looking across the *dambo* they could see nothing of the bull, and concluded that he must have crossed the clear space and entered the long grass. They well knew the danger of pursuing him there, but they followed the spoor confidently over the open land. The tracks led them past two ant-hills not more than thirty inches high, between which was growing a small bush that had been shrivelled by the fire but still had some leaves. With their eyes well ahead and without the slightest anticipation of danger, one of the hunters passed round one side of this obstruction and one round the other. The buffalo was lying behind it, and one of them stepped almost on his nose. With a loud grunt the bull rose to his feet, scooped his victim up on his horns, and endeavoured to toss him into the air. But the hunter was a strong athletic man. He sezied hold of the horns, and although he was shot upwards he retained his hold. As he came down he turned a somersault and managed to get astride of the bull's huge neck, still retaining his hold. His companion, who had had the luck to walk on to the rear end of the beast, heard the grunt, saw his friend thrown into the air, and the next moment saw him firmly seated behind its ears. The bull immediately went mad with rage and galloped round in a circle making the most violent efforts to dislodge its rider. But although he was thrown about in the most alarming manner he held grimly on. His friend was a cool hand and a good shot. He was carrying a heavy rifle and he could see the urgency of the case; but for quite a time it was impossible to shoot. At length he took a chance, and the bull crashed to earth, throwing its rider over its head. He picked himself up, seized his rifle, and gave it a finishing shot. It was a tribute to his strength that he was able to hang on for so long in that terrific ride, and to his toughness that his nerve was unaffected and that he was uninjured beyond a few bruises and abrasions. In two or three days he was ready and able to hunt again. I should imagine that not many men have ridden a buffalo bull and lived to tell the tale.

Buffalo are silent animals. I have once or twice heard a calf bellow, the noise being exactly like that of a domestic calf, and I have heard the bulls occasionally emit a rumbling grunt of contentment when lying down or feeding and unaware of the presence of man. A charging bull gives a series of savage grunts. But there is one characteristic sound made by every buffalo when it is dying — a moaning bellow. Every hunter is familiar with it, and native hunters when approaching a fallen buffalo listen for the sound. I remember an incident which happened when I was hunting buffalo with a relative in Northern Rhodesia. We were following the fresh spoor of a large herd —probably a hundred—and as we were coming up with them, that pest of hunters, a honey-bird, started to twitter and hover round us, and we were afraid it would frighten the herd. So we sent a boy off to follow it, and waited till it had drawn off to one side. But the herd was so close that they took sudden fright, and we heard the thunder of their hooves as they galloped off. We again took up the spoor, and at length espied them through the trees standing in a long line athwart our line of advance, alert and listening. The country was dotted with large ant-hills, which made approach easy. We motioned the boys to crouch, and we two crept forward behind an ant-hill until we were within fifty yards of the herd. There was not much time; for they were thoroughly alarmed and at any moment might be off again. We poked our rifles round the edge of the ant-hill, each picked a beast, and at a signal both fired together. I had picked a fine bull at one end of the line: his horns now hang in my hall. I saw that he was hard hit, but at the shots the whole herd galloped off across our front, and as they went I worked my bolt and got in another shot at a running bull, which carried on with the herd. Then I turned my attention to the first, just in time to see it fall after running for some thirty yards. It had no sooner fallen than it gave its death moan. I was satisfied with my bag, and walked up to inspect it. But my companion had only got in one shot, and his beast had not fallen before the herd disappeared in the forest. He therefore set off running after them at his best pace. As he turned the corner of an ant-hill behind which we had seen the last of the herd he fairly tripped over another bull lying immediately behind it, and as he did so it emitted a loud bellow. I heard the sound and looked just in time to see his startled swerve. But it was the death call that had startled him, and he was in no danger. He was not greatly disconcerted. He took in the situation at a glance, ran on, and found yet another buffalo dead, which from the bullet that was afterwards found in it we discovered to be the beast he had shot at. The one he had nearly fallen over turned out to be the victim of my second shot. By this time it was hot, and we were perhaps ten miles from camp; for the hunt had, as usual with buffalo, proved a long chase. I said something about the dreary trudge before us. But my companion knew his Africa and had no intention of facing that walk. He sent off two boys with instructions to run all the way to the camp, to apprise the village near-by, and to hurry back at their best speed with our bicycles. Meantime we inspected, measured, and photographed the trophies, ate our lunch, smoked our pipes, and dozed comfortably in the shade. In the afternoon we heard a hubbub of voices approaching, and the boys arrived at a run with the bicycles and the entire population of the village, in the highest good-humour at the prospect of free meat. The country was the typical lightly forested highland plain of North-Eastern Rhodesia, and the grass under the trees had been burned. A gang of six active boys was picked out to run ahead and clear a track, and a boy was detailed to push behind each bicycle. In this way we rode home triumphantly and without undue effort. Meanwhile the rest of the population set to with a will to cut up and carry in the meat, and there was great feasting and revelry in the village that night.

A book was published recently called 'Turning Wheels,' in which the author, Stuart Cloete, described the life of the Boers during and after their great trek in 1838. He describes an incident in which a buffalo, having driven a bare-footed woman up a tree too low for her to climb beyond its reach, and having tried in other ways to dislodge her, deliberately began to lick her bare feet, until its rough tongue had worn away the flesh down to the bone, causing her to bleed to death. Several readers of the book, doubting the veracity of this statement, have asked me whether such a happening was possible. I have never known of such an incident, though the author states that the Boer annals record one. But the great hunter Cotton Oswell, the companion of Livingstone in his first journey of exploration, records a somewhat similar incident in the only written account he ever gave of his hunting experiences. A native took refuge under a fallen log from a charging buffalo. The buffalo tried first to reach him with its horns, and not succeeding, deliberately began to lick his leg, continuing until it had rasped off the flesh down to the thigh-bone. The native died from loss of blood. I have examined and eaten a number of buffalo tongues, and they certainly have an outside skin rough and hard enough to inflict such an injury. I am not, therefore, inclined to doubt that such an incident as that described might actually occur. But it would be bad luck to have to choose a tree so low that one's feet could not be hoisted above the buffalo's reach.

In 1935 my wife and I accomplished a sixteen-thousand-mile motor journey in Africa, from the Cape to the Nile and back. We were fortunate in seeing and observing nearly every species of wild game, but I was afraid that she would not have the luck to see buffalo; for in the daytime they cling closely to heavy cover, where she could not follow them. But our good fortune held. We hired a small steamer on Lake Albert which took us for a day up the Victoria Nile. On both sides of the river there is a game reserve; the animals there have become tame and move about freely in the daytime. We were hugging one bank as we rounded a bend, and there came into sight a herd of over fifty buffalo spread along the edge of the river drinking. As we steamed into full view they lifted their heads and gazed at us, their curiosity getting the better of their fear. There were some grand bulls among them, and they stared at us with their savage eyes without moving until we approached within thirty yards, when with one accord they wheeled and lumbered off into the long grass. While I watched them there was lying beside me a movie camera, but I was so pleased and fascinated by the sight that I forgot all about it until too late, and so missed a unique opportunity, which I do not suppose I shall ever have again.

I shall never shoot another buffalo. As I have grown older I have lost my desire to kill, though as interested as ever in wild game. I love to watch them living their lives, and if I had my time again would hunt with nothing more deadly than a camera, except in the case of the crocodile, which I cannot bring myself to love. But the buffalo has given me many a thrill and a store of memories which it is pleasant to recall. May the species long survive !

WE CHANGE IN MID-STREAM.

BY RODERICK CLEUGH.

MOST of us at some time during our lives have had the urge to do something out of the ordinary, either in a light-hearted or serious manner. I had great satisfaction in fulfilling an ambition to work a pneumatic drill and tear up great pieces of concrete, much to the amusement of the men who were paid to do it properly; on the other hand, I had a more sober urge to go down in a submarine and see how it worked. I have done this too, and, although the 'works' may still be a mystery to me, I can speak more authoritatively on the subject of submarines.

Always having a love for the sea, I nursed from childhood an ambition to go out with the herring drifters and trawlers, and each time I happened to see a photograph of those gallant little North Sea vessels smashing their way into harbour in the full fury of a gale, that ambition would come to the surface. It was not so easy to satisfy as the desire to use the pneumatic drill, and it was many a year before I had, unexpectedly, my trip in a trawler. And it will be many another year before I wittingly go again.

It all began one morning in September, with my room-mate, Bill, waking me at the unholy hour of three o'clock. Bill was my Captain of Aircraft, and we were members of a flying-boat squadron on detachment at a base on the Yorkshire coast, waiting to take part in an exercise. Our particular job that morning was to take off at dawn and fly out to sea on predetermined tracks to try to locate an 'unfriendly' fleet, reported, the evening before, to be coming up from the Channel. Since the base was a good step from the inn at which we were staying, Bill was wasting no time getting me up. A very wet and cold face-cloth did the trick, and I was soon dressing in all the spare clothes I possessed, for flying at dawn can be a chilly business.

A few minutes later we were down at the edge of the water, where vague shadows flitted about between the tents and our temporary headquarters. In the faint half-light of the morning it was just possible to discern the large shapes of the flying boats riding at anchor. We reported to the Commanding Officer with the other pilots and navigators, and after a few last-minute orders and instructions bade him a shivery good-bye and went out to our machine.

Ours was a twin-engined flying boat, smallish, with a total crew of six: two officer pilots, sergeant-pilot navigator, wireless operator, fitter, and rigger. Bill and I had often flown together in her, and generally with the same crew, so our organisation ran smoothly. The intense quiet of that small piece of water and its adjoining village was soon shattered. The other aircraft were four-engined types, and since five were going on the first patrol I have no doubt that many of the local inhabitants had reason to curse us: eighteen engines can make a terrible noise. There was a good breeze blowing, and as I taxied around warming my engines, with the spray coming over the cockpit, and in some anxiety because of many boats moving about in so restricted a space, I felt awake for the first time with the thrill of it all. In a few minutes we had jockeyed for a position to take off, and after a last careful look round I opened the throttles and roared down the water.

The wind was south-westerly, and taking off into it I could see that it was not only the fleeting night that was making things a drab colour, but rather a heavy black line of cloud. Turning slowly as we gained height, we were treated to an increasingly impressive picture—a cloud-strewn sunrise out over the sea. The vivid vertical streaks of yellow and gold light, interlaced with ragged horizontal clouds, made me feel "on top of the world." To the north, jutting out from the coast-line, Flamborough Head loomed up, a solid-looking, greenish-brown mass. Below us the waves were being lashed by the rising wind, and the contrast of their sun-flecked tops with the blackness of the sea looked forbidding.

We were soon over Flamborough, and I circled the lighthouse awaiting our correct time of departure, which was not many minutes away. The sergeant came forward and stood beside me while I put our first course on the compass; then took the time on his stopwatch as we passed over the light and headed out to sea in a north-easterly direction. The crew had settled down; for in the event of the fleet not being picked up by one of our machines we were due to complete a lengthy patrol. The wireless operator was working away, ready to intercept any messages to base and to send our periodic position signals. His is an important job in the air, and a good operator, as ours was, is a highly respected member of a crew. Behind him the rigger was busy with a large breakfast order, and tempting odours were creeping forward to increase my craving for food—all the more annoying, because I knew it would not be my turn to eat for another hour or so. Farther up the hull the fitter sat watching his engine instruments; temperatures can be annoying things and go up or down without warning. Bill was keeping a look-out beside me, while the navigator moved back and forward doing his work, with an eye open for anything that looked like a battleship or destroyer. I kept my eyes on the instruments and tried not to think of food.

When I had completed two and a half hours at the controls Bill came forward and said he would take over and that my breakfast was nearly ready. I slipped gratefully out of the seat and stretched my cramped limbs. If flying in the early morning, or the sight of a beautiful sunrise, can give one a wonderful feeling, I can tell you the sight of well-done sausages, bacon, and eggs is a worthy accompaniment. I had plenty of room inside, and they disappeared in no time. A few minutes later I was finishing a mug of cocoa and smoking a cigarette in drowsy contentment. Opposite me the fitter was sitting, eyeing his instruments and occasionally making an adjustment to the radiator controls.

By this time we were about three hundred miles out to sea—a sea that looked anything but pleasant. When we passed a ship we could judge the height of the waves by the amount of hull that hove out of the water when it plunged up and down. The wind was nearing forty miles an hour, and the weather was squally with occasional showers. I looked down and pitied the poor devils who had to drive a ship through that sort of weather, and wondered if they envied us our job, which to them must have looked so safe and smooth.

Suddenly it occurred to me that the fitter was taking more than an ordinary interest in his work. He was struggling with a control that seemed to be open as far as it would go, and had such an anxious look on his face that I inquired the cause. He pointed to the temperature gauge for the port engine, which was doing the most alarming things—dropping to below normal, then running up the scale to beyond the danger limit. I reported to Bill, who immediately throttled back that engine and increased the revs. on the other to try and keep our height and speed constant. When it was seen that the port engine was intent on going wrong, we informed base of what had occurred and turned for home, and no sooner had this been done than the engine seized up altogether. What a horrid-looking sight a still propeller is when one is accustomed to seeing it whirling away in the air!

The loss of one engine did not worry those of us in the hull, since we fully expected to make home on the other, until a slap on the bulkhead from Bill made me go forward. "Jettison the port tank immediately; I can't keep my height!" And I pulled the lever and let go all the petrol in that tank. The seriousness of it was brought home to me as I watched the altimeter needle still going slowly down, while Bill tried to nurse the machine and keep her up, unsuccessfully. I asked him for instructions.

"Inflate your airvelopes, jettison fifty gallons from the starboard tank, inform base we may have to force land."

While the fitter kept a check on the petrol gauge I gently released the jettison valve until the reading was down fifty gallons. The operator was pounding out the disquieting news that we might have to come down. The feeling was rather tense when he shouted, "Long aerial's gone!" for we all knew we must be within a hundred feet of the water. The long aerial hangs out from the bottom of the hull, and if the weights on the end of it strike the water it is immediately torn away. I went up and sat with Bill as soon as everyone had his equipment inflated, and the operator switched over to short wave to maintain touch with base on a safety wave-length.

We were still gradually losing height, and we could do nothing about it. Bill was counting on the fact that our course home was dead into wind, which might help considerably, and that there is always a cushion of air about six to ten feet off the water which is more buoyant and likely to supply just that little extra something to keep us air-borne. We were soon close to it, and when we smacked the top of a wave, and bounced, one could hardly say the feeling was pleasant. I looked back into the hull to see how the crew were taking it. Four serious faces stared very hard at nothing.

Then began what was to be one of the longest-drawn-out three-hour flights I have ever made. It was about nine o'clock when the port engine stopped, and from then until shortly after twelve we had a nightmarish journey waiting for our inevitable arrival in the sea; for it was quite apparent to us all that we could not make base on the petrol we had left. With one engine, Bill was flying that machine magnificently, but every few minutes he found he just could not keep the machine off the water, and we would hit it a smart crack that shivered up and down the hull and our spines. We kept a look-out for any ship that we could signal to in the event of our coming down. There were not many. Once I looked round at the crew and grinned—I was too serious inside to call my face contortion a smile—and the sight was heartening. The operator was working away with base, as unconcerned as usual, the fitter was gazing expressionlessly at the working half of his instruments, the navigator was idly looking at a chart as he could do no more, and the rigger was lighting a cigarette. He came forward gently and offered me one, just as we hit the ocean again, and "Have one, sir . . . before they all get wet," was all he had to say.

Eventually it came. With a startling cough and a splutter the engine died, and we hit the water a superb crack, bouncing high in the air. Just as

Bill put the nose down the engine came on again with a roar, only for a split moment, but that moment was our luckiest; for it was sufficient to carry us over a trough in the huge waves on to a plateau of rough water. We bounced and splashed our way along until we came to the next trough. As the little machine slid downwards like a toboggan, Bill and I covered our heads in expectation of the big wave that we could see coming; and what a surprise we had! The game little craft cocked her nose in the air and climbed like a fighter. Up at the top she paused, and then with the wind having considerable effect, started to move backwards through the water.

Mentally congratulating Bill on his successful handling of the machine, we got everything ready in case damage had been done to the aircraft, though none was apparent at the time. The rubber dinghy was brought from its stowage up to the centre section deck, made fast and inflated; a drogue was rigged and dropped from the bows to act as a sea-anchor—and promptly snapped as though it had been held by string. We rigged another on to the anchor chain, and this held very well, steadying the sickening movement. Pausing to see how we were getting on, we found there was no damage, and that we were not as yet taking water. The dinghy was ready, and the flares were uncovered for use; there was the thought in our minds that they might be useful at night, if we were unlucky enough to be stranded so long.

We signalled our position to base, but owing to the hectic homeward journey we could not count on it as being accurate—nor could base—nor could they locate us by Direction Finding methods, for we could not broadcast on long wave without an aerial. We were equipped with a collapsable kite for such an emergency, to hold an aerial in the air, so we unshipped this and attempted to rig it. That kite was a nightmare, and we had to laugh at ourselves many times in the course of its erection. Never have I seen so many bamboo sticks with so few holes and sockets to put them in; and its size was such that it was quite unmanageable on the centre section. What with the cramped space, the howling wind tearing at the silk, and the lurching of the flying boat, if it had not been for an outsize in sense of humour we should have gladly thrown the whole thing overboard.. But it held a definite hope for us, and we eventually had it rigged. With the aerial fixed to the string and both passed up forward over the top plane, we anxiously endeavoured to launch it. After a couple of false starts it went up like a rocket, nearly taking the two men on the line and me with it. I, unfortunately, was holding on to it with a boat-hook—an unusual launching tool but very useful for lifting the kite above the down-draught of the planes. If it had not been for a life-line, I should have had my first ride in a kite, but I was held and the boat-hook came unstuck at the critical moment. It was not a success. Once the wind took the kite it climbed with such rapidity that holes were torn in the gloves of those holding the line, and after it had risen to about a hundred feet the line jammed in a slot in the mainplane. While we were trying to clear it, the kite performed one or two wiggly movements and with superb grace dived into the sea. We had one forlorn look at the remains as we sailed quickly past it.

What to do next? Our speed astern was about ten knots, and in order to keep my mind occupied I worked out on the chart that if the wind held we should be aground in Norway in two days' time. When we told base what had happened to our kite, and that there was no chance of erecting anything for Direction Finding work, they comforted us with the news that a large number of aircraft were searching for us, all W/T stations were keeping watch, and a destroyer was being sent out from South Shields. Actually it was small comfort when we realised what the weather was like: clouds five hundred feet, wind now gale force, sea rough, and visibility on the surface one to two miles. We decided to let off distress flares at intervals; for we had taken a small amount of water, and we kept an all-round look-out for ships.

By this time four of the crew had been, and were being, violently seasick, owing to the peculiar motion of the flying boat and the fumes from the petrol we had jettisoned after landing. Another upsetting smell came from the galley, where all our food had fallen from the lockers, and with spilt paraffin from the Primus stoves there was certainly an unappetising combination of odours. The wireless operator was getting the worst of it; for he was continuously working in his compartment amidships, and often he had to leave his set and hang out of one of the after-cockpits. Since he had gone without breakfast the effect on him was disastrous, and as he became weaker the tapping of his key became more spasmodic and irregular, until at intervals he could carry on no longer and quietly passed out. We were unable to do anything for him. I must confess that I, who have never known a touch of seasickness in any weather, went more than once to an opening to await the inevitable nausea, but both the fitter and I must have been possessed of brass tummies, for neither of us was ill the entire trip. Everyone was cold, wet, and a little miserable, but none of us doubted that we would be picked up in time, though being over eighty miles from the coast lessened our chances of help from shore. We had settled down to the boring business of waiting when suddenly there was a shout from Bill up in front, "Hoy, chaps, a trawler astern!" What luck—and what a relief!

We scrambled out on to the hull, all except the operator, who showed no interest in anything, and sent off a distress signal. It had barely stopped spluttering when we lit another, and you can imagine our feelings when every time we saw the trawler—she was two miles away on our port beam—she seemed to be holding a south-westerly course. And we were going north-east. But we were not to be disappointed as so many people are during a sea adventure; she went about and began tacking towards us. We were happier then, as she came closer, and we debated what nationality she was, for there was no flag evident in her rigging. What was evident was the crew, and the number for so small a ship seemed amazing. They lined the rails, we could make out at least twelve of various sizes, and as they waved and shouted we thought the sight a very cheering one indeed. None of us could make out what the other hailed, and so we concluded that they were foreigners and not Englishmen with an extraordinary dialect. Still, we did not care what she was; for she looked as safe as a hotel, and we all wished we were aboard her.

The trawler, we learned later, was from the Dutch herring fleet, and the Dutch are mariners of no mean ability. They manœuvred their unwieldy little craft back and forward across our bows, and it was only when we saw that it would be impossible for her to get a line to us without ramming the aircraft that we thought of something ourselves. We were, as I have said, going astern at a fair speed, and by joining together every piece of rope we could find in the hull, we secured one end to an empty water-tank and slung it out for'ard. Paying out the line quickly we drifted clear, and when the tank was a hundred feet or so ahead of us the Dutchman swept down and hauled it aboard. Tying a light line to the tank they threw it back in the water, and kept station on our bows so that there should be no strain on the rope. We started hauling in. Have you ever hauled a rope a few yards long out of the water? Or one a few hundred yards long? It is wearing work, especially when there is only room for two to haul in. Each successive length of rope was thicker and thicker, and by the time we had filled the forepart of the flying boat with what seemed miles of it we hoped the end would come soon—the end of the rope. Finally, thank goodness, we came to a part that was most unwieldy, about three inches thick, and the Dutchman signalled that that would be sufficient to hold us. We made it fast to the bollards and the anchor chain grip in the bottom. When we were content with the tow-line we signalled them to shorten up and try to take a couple of our crew off; for Bill wished to find out our position accurately and decide where they should tow us. Also our rigger was the only non-swimmer among us, and it was considered better to have him in the trawler lest anything happen to the aircraft. The fishermen shortened up on the tow, and sent back a small rubber buoy attached to a light life-line. We picked it up and hauled in more lengths of rope; we were becoming proficient in the hand-over-hand business. To the middle of the life-line we attached the sergeant, who volunteered for the first dipping. Base now knew that we were in tow; for the operator had recovered sufficiently to work his set, and that probably made them feel a little happier. It did us.

That Dogger Bank water did look cold, and we appreciated the sergeant's slight hesitation before he made the plunge, but once he had done so it was not long before the big hardy Dutchmen had pulled him through and out of the water just as they would their fishing-nets. We still had one end of the line, of course, and we hauled back until there was enough to attach the rigger to the buoy and line. His face was a picture before he went over the side. With a sickly grin he said, "This is the deepest swim I am *ever* going to have . . .," and plunged in with a big splash, backwards. We were anxiously watching him as he was pulled spluttering and splashing through the water, when there was a tremendous crack, and our tow-line, which was taking a severe strain owing to its being shortened up, snapped, and we began to drift away from the trawler. Agonising thoughts must have flashed through the rigger's mind as he saw what had happened—he admitted afterwards that he nearly burst the rubber buoy clutching at it.

Once he was safely aboard we again went through the tedious business of paying out line and waiting for the fishermen to manœuvre and pick it up. Utterly exhausted by the time we had hauled in the large hawser, we were surprised, but pleased, to see them attaching a steel cable. It was heavy work getting that weighty thing inboard, and, abandoning our flying clothing and safety gear, we were wet with perspiration by the time it was buttoned down to the bow. Still, we were satisfied that it would take a hurricane to break that piece, and once again we were under way.

Our last signal to base had been that we were again adrift, having broken the tow-line. Bill wanted to let them know that we were secured, but the wireless accumulators had packed up as also had the operator, who by this time was in a dreadful state. Then, while the sergeant was telling us that we could be towed to either Scarborough or South Shields, a land-plane roared over our heads and disappeared into the rain and mist. They had seen us, and turning back, passed overhead, and in a few seconds were out of sight on their way home. Bill semaphored back to the sergeant to make for Scarborough.

The inside of our machine looked like a badly kept rope shop, and the smell of tar and hemp was adding to our discomfort. With the awful jerky movement from being in tow, we felt rather miserable, and Bill debated whether we should abandon the aircraft and go aboard the trawler. If the tow parted during the night there would be slight chance of picking it up again—it was difficult enough in daylight. I think what influenced him most was the semi-conscious state of the wireless operator, who had turned an unpleasant green colour. I managed to get a Primus going and make him a hot drink, but it neither appealed to him nor to any of us, and I gave it to the herrings on the Dogger Bank. Just before dark Bill signalled the fishing boat that we were coming off, and having shortened up, the life-line was passed back to us, and we prepared to leave.

The fitter took the first ducking, then the wireless operator, and the latter was certainly revived when he hit the water. I love swimming in warm water, suitably dressed in a bathing costume, but voluntarily leaping into a cold, heavy sea takes a bit of a push, and one never feels so wet as when immersed fully dressed. The Dutchmen pulled hand over hand, and I had occasional glimpses of the little ship's stern lifting out of the water and slapping down again till the decks were awash. I could not help wondering if that whirling and dangerous-looking propeller was going to wind itself around the rope or me, but my fears were groundless. With a mighty heave the fishermen had me on deck, and I landed drenched and dripping amid a crowd of cheery-looking weather-beaten Dutch, who seemed to be enjoying the show very much indeed. I waited while Bill was taken off safely and until the tow-line had been once more lengthened, then went below to the skipper's cabin. It was in the stern, a tiny little place with four bunks, shared by the mate and engineers, though at the time it appeared as though half the crew were installed there.

As everyone knows, the Dutch are a clean race, and in their country their homes are cheerful and spotlessly kept. But we were in a trawler with no womenfolk aboard, the crew had been to sea for three weeks, all had growths of beard, and the stench of fish was terrible. However, with much laughing and spitting appreciatively on the floor, we were soon provided with thick clean underwear, sweaters, stockings and wooden clogs, and roomy corduroy pantaloons. The only towels they possessed were neckerchiefs, which caused us some concern, but the warm thick clothing soon absorbed the drips. The skipper offered me a drink (our conversations being carried on with our hands), and I, of course, accepted. He produced a musty-looking bottle of domestic wine with a broad smile and more spitting, and a hunt took place for a glass. Eventually one was found hiding in the bottom of a locker, and the thick grime in it carefully scraped out with a piece of newspaper. I am rather finicky about clean glasses and that sort of thing, but I managed a sickly grim smile and took the wine down like medicine. Bill had one look at my face and the glass, and as nicely as he could refused the kind offer. In the cabin was a small stove, piping hot, and four narrow bunks completely enclosed except for small holes through which one climbed to bed. Out of one of these holes the wan face of the rigger appeared, and what with the fetid air in the cabin, the lurching of the ship, and the crowd of Dutchmen smoking heavy tobacco, I decided to try out my clogs and have a walk on deck.

Up top I was surprised when one of the fishermen came and spoke to me in English, but in the dusk of the evening I made out the roughly clothed man in front of me to be the sergeant, who, having been to sea for a number of years before he came into the Service, was feeling quite at home. He told me that there were coffee and excellent herrings cooking down in the forecastle, and we were expected down for some supper. Having been refreshed with the breeze and spray, and not having eaten since breakfast-time, I was ravenous, and felt I could do justice to any number of herrings.

I clambered down the ladder in my wooden boots into a compartment full of smoke, smells, and men, the haze so thick that I could hardly make out the other end. There were eight narrow bunks, four on each side, and a few bodies could be seen sleeping off their watch below, while round a large stove in the centre were three men and two small boys. On the stove was a large pan, full of herrings frying in about an inch of grease, and over the top was a pall of bluish smoke. On one side of the stove was a large kettle, bubbling and boiling merrily, and its steam smelt of coffee. One of the cabin-boys moved over to me, and with a fetching smile said something in his own language which ended up with 'herrink,' and I took this to be an invitation. I smiled back and nodded, saying, "Yes, please," and the lad dipped his hand into the sizzling pan and pulled out a herring by its tail. I was nonplussed and stared at the herring, wondering whether I was to take or merely admire it. Seeing the look of doubt on my face the other boy nudged the first and whispered "Capitaine" in his ear, and they both scurried round until a large sheet of shiny newspaper had been found. Folding this they plucked out three dripping herrings, put them on the paper, and presented the whole lot to me. I thanked them and sat down on the edge of a bunk flap. With the company staring at me and smiling, I felt rather embarrassed, and waited for the knife and fork which did not seem to be forthcoming. Again sensing my unaccustomedness, the boy picked up a herring and began to eat it in the most natural manner possible, all the while laughing and talking, so I made as game a show as I could and started to eat my share with tarry fingers. One of the men produced a grime-rimmed bowl and poured 'coffee' into it for me, and another produced from somewhere a gargantuan piece of hard-tack at least six inches across, an inch thick, and as hard as a rock. What a meal! I did my best, but soon had word from my stomach that it was not going to accept another bite, so I stalled and had a sip out of the bowl of 'coffee.' I have, in the past, eaten and drunk many odd things, but no one can possibly say they would enjoy greasy herrings, hard-tack, and so-called coffee in a small cabin full of greasy smoke and smells without name, the whole thing going up and down in a motion extremely peculiar. My tummy said go, and I went. I smiled, muttered my thanks, and went up the ladder like a monkey. Oh, what a relief the spray and wind were, and how quickly my injured internals settled down! Everything was kept under control, so I still have an unbroken record, but that time it was a very near thing!

During the night we stood watches ourselves to keep an eye on the flying boat, whose shadowy shape and navigation lights we could see astern. She gamely took a lot of buffeting on the trip home without parting company or taking very much water aboard. We spent most of our watches in the wheelhouse, and there were always six or seven of the Dutch about. They maintained a cheerful and friendly manner the whole time, and it is surprising that we were able to carry on conversation with a mutual vocabulary of only half a dozen words. Bill and I discovered, when we arrived in Scarborough, that we had developed the habit of talking with our hands. I hope that one day I shall visit Scheveningen and meet them all again in their homes with the Fraus and children of whom they are so proud. They rolled us cigarettes on the slightest provocation, and by the time I had managed to inhale their strong tobacco and spit appreciatively on the deck, I felt as tough as though I had been at sea for years. But I also felt hungry, and if only there had been a knife and fork on board I might have attempted another herring in the open air. I was asleep in a bunk at one time when the skipper woke me to listen to their short-wave radio, which is used to communicate with all the ships in the herring fleet. While I held an ancient-looking horn loud-speaker into a broken attachment, the skipper worked the dials. A depressed Dutch voice boomed out the fishing news, and the skipper kept repeating in high glee, " Papa, papa," so I took it that the voice belonged to his father. His father must have been very upset over the fishing; he sounded so sad.

When I awoke in the morning the sea had calmed, the sun was shining, and we could see the cliffs near our destination. We felt grand, and the Dutch were quite excited about going into port with the flying boat ignominiously towing astern. It did look pathetic, trundling along at a speed of seven knots. Just before we arrived in the outer harbour the skipper and mate produced a bucket of fresh water and sat down one on either side to deal with three weeks' growth of whisker. It (the bucket) was then offered to Bill and me, but after one quick look at the contents we decided to go ashore dirty. A flying boat passed overhead and later landed in Scarborough with our C.O. and some other officers, and when we landed and met them our dirty faces and fishy clothes caused both them and the photographers considerable amusement. Someone had sensibly packed a bag for us, and armed with that we set out for one of Scarborough's leading hotels, where we wanted a bath, a drink, and lunch, but, primarily, a bath; and it was with not a little embarrassment that Bill and I clopped our way up to the reception desk. I suppose, since it was still the 'season,' the clerk was justified in refusing us a room, but Bill and I looked at one another in disappointment and disgust. So near—and yet so far, and we did want that bath. However, the C.O. came to the rescue, and we immediately became owners of a double room *and* bath. But our final embarrassment was to come. As we stepped into the lift, with the stench of fish high upon us and our underwear sticking out underneath our sweaters, two very respectable-looking ladies sniffed audibly, and stepped out. We laughed. They 'couldn't take it'! I hope the hotel did not lose two good clients.

MORE GANG.

BY W. F. GRAHAM.

THERE is a narrow dip between the pine trees and a bramble-covered slope in Birklees Wood where a feather of smoke looks natural. So do some small boys who flit about, like the last descendants of the 'Good Folk' who danced here once upon a time. A gang of little boys. Yes, I know—the Gang—my Gang—but they are the right company to blend with the surroundings. Sun-bleached heads and sun-bleached clothing; no bright colours to catch the eye; nothing to jar with the prevailing tones of green and brown. To me they are the pixies of the wood; they and the squirrels.

A movement in the heather at the edge of the pines. I cannot see them, but they are there, under cover, reconnoitring. Goodness knows why; for they know me well enough, and that but for me their fire would be out. I made them light it here in the open beside the ditch they call a wee burn, or Birklees Wood might have gone up in smoke and flames. The fire was lit with my matches, then left, and I am kippering myself out of sheer benevolence.

There is no such thing as time in the wood, and in summer not even complete darkness at night; a deepening of shadows, that is all, and the smell of night. At any hour, if you keep still, there are things to see, or feel, or guess about; and if you wander, more things reveal themselves. Old Jenny-heron has a nest in a tree; not a very high tree, and only one nest and one pair of herons every year. It is an easy tree to climb, but I have put a stop to that with some barbed wire and a bucket of tar. Young naturalists can no longer get up to see whether a heron has to put her legs through holes in the nest in order to sit on it. This used to be a favourite wheeze of the Gang when a newcomer seemed innocent. My tar and wire have spoilt the joke.

The roe-deer have a beaten ring made round a bush. They say that when the does want to be rid of the calves they gallop round and round till the youngsters are tired, thus weaning them. I have never seen what really happens, but the slot marks are there, made for some purpose or other. A fox, too, does something nobody will believe. When his coat becomes flea-ridden, he takes a mouthful of wool, trots off to the nearest running stream, standing in it so that the current flows against the lay of his fur, and waits. Presently the fleas take refuge in the wool, and he lets go. That's all.

I was told this by the Gang,

and I have verified the yarn. It is true, and truth is stranger than fiction here as elsewhere. Fiction—the art of 'kidding' oneself and others about birds and beasts is a different matter. It is a pure delight for the imagination, and a lure to attract a larger circle of acquaintances. They say children alone can live in the land of dreams and make-believe. They do seem more at home there, it is true; but any man who has a bit of woodland or a garden, or a corner of meadow, owns a scrap of earth that may be enchanted. A chronic dreamer is a useless kind of fellow, but a man who is able on occasion deliberately to ignore facts, gets out of life a certain relish, a quiet kick, a bedroom-slipper kind of kick, for his private soul's delectation. It keeps his mind from growing stale, and he will remain a boy at heart long after his legs and teeth have failed him and his once buoyant steps have been tamed to a hobble on a diet of soft, boiled food. I have not yet reached that stage; dreams are not all of the past; but, dreaming or waking, wherever I may be, it needs but the whistle of a sandpiper to bring back Birklees Wood, the wee burn and the wood-smoke, the whistling and joy of life when pixies mingle in the fire-light at dusk between the pine trees and the bramble brakes.

Whistling and the joy of life recall a memory of Philip, pixie, Gang-boy, hero, the very spirit of all things that draw one to youth, woodlands, and the clean open spaces. I first knew him as a small boy among the navvies; 'a nipper,' the lad who looks after the fire and boils the dinner tea. A laugh and a pair of bright blue eyes attracted me, and something in the way those hefty, clay-stained men treated him. It was neither tenderness nor affection, but something different from the usual manner of a navvy to a boy. They were Irish navvies, and Philip was Irish.

I never heard them swear at him, and whether fighting-drunk or sober there was always a softening in their roughness when they spoke to him. Had Philip been a man you would have said the navvies respected him, but, being only a nipper, there must have been some other reason for their gentleness and the pride they took in him. I think they unconsciously classed him among the blessed saints, thus raising their nipper to a plane higher than that of mascot.

A simplified Kim is the description that suits him best, and friend to all the world he certainly was. By degrees I learned something of his history; for there were times when he escaped from boiling kettles and you might find him on the seashore that faces Ireland, or drilling a company of lads he had conscripted for their souls' good. He explained that they had been going all to bits for want of looking after. It was a little welfare organisation all his own, and much more effective than a number of larger organisations I could mention.

Originality was Philip's strong suit, coupled with a precocious knowledge (picked up from the navvies, I suspect) of human nature. As a born handler of men he struck me as out of the ordinary, and he could combine discipline with humour in a way that captivated his victims. The first time I saw him with his squad, or company, he was correcting a boy for scratching himself on parade, and the method employed was to place the offender upright in a large drain-pipe with only his head and shoulders sticking out. "There, me lad, I guarantee ye won't scratch much inside that!" They all loved him, even the boy in the drain-pipe.

After parade, down by the sea, Philip talked about himself, which was the first of many talks, and the real beginning of our friendship. One of a large family; somewhere 'out on the bog' in County Tipperary, he had gone to work on a farm at the age of thirteen. Not much schooling, but a very imperative need to go out and earn his living, and so to a farm he went. The farmer was a grim person with a 'shmeg'—a chin-beard—and his wife used ox-hides to carpet her house, the beating of which when she cleaned out the rooms sounded like guns, or thunder. Philip and another boy slept in a loft over the stables, and nightly made plans to snare the old man by the 'shmeg' with a loop on the end of a cord. The farming could not have amounted to much, for the place was all bog, and the feeding amounted to rather less, but all through the disjointed narrative, the scraps and bits that came to me at different times, ran, like a golden ripple or gleam, Miss Cicily. Who Miss Cicily was, or what station she occupied, I never found out, and I never asked, because after a while I got to love the way she came and vanished in flashes that hardly gave one time to make a picture. Miss Cicily and her horse—"a lovely lady on harseback"—Miss Cicily in the garden, standing beside a breast-high wall, looking out on a paddock where Philip was trying to catch the grey pony; Miss Cicily and the ass-cart. It was always taken for granted that I knew Miss Cicily, and all about her, whereas I can only guess she was charming.

Perhaps she died, or went away; for Philip dropped her name from his story when he left the farm and joined a navvy gang going over to England to dig foundations for munition-works. The Great War was on, and Philip, like the rest of youth, wanted to touch the fringe of it; besides which there was more money in navvying. I met him when I was home on leave; lost touch with him, then heard of him again in France. He had enlisted under age, and gone straight out. It was just by chance I heard news of him from a man in hospital who used to rave about some lad or other in his company. This turned out to be Philip's company officer, and all his raving was about Philip. As at first he mentioned no name, I put his enthusiasm down to shell-shock or nerves; at any rate, it sounded impossible, till I asked him who this paragon might be. Then I no longer thought it impossible. It was just the nipper fulfilling his early promise. They had recommended him for a commission. I thought of the mother out on the bog in County Tipperary, of her man, gone to a labour battalion in France, and of the kindly neighbours calling every day to ask, "Is that damned old man of yours dead yet?" I wondered what they would think of Philip.

The nipper never had his commission after all. The Germans got him, and for the rest of the war he remained a prisoner. I wrote to him, but whether he received my letters I cannot tell, and being taken prisoner seemed a sad anticlimax. He should have been killed doing some splendid deed, and have been numbered among those whose genius shone for one brief hour to show what might have been.

We must have come home about the same time, and I had not been demobilised a month before I heard from him. He promised to tell me a whole lot at our next meeting, which is still to happen. He is back in County Tipperary, running a fish-and-chip shop.

Jim came later than Philip, drifted into the Gang sponsored by Dave and John, and they have established a little camping place of their own in a hollow that was once a gravel-pit. There are other inhabitants to whom the place rightly belongs: sand-martins, a family of stoats, and an odorous establishment of foxes in a deep, dark, earth. They do not seem to mind the three boys; perhaps they recognise a kindred folk who have not come there to harry them, and whom they can afford to treat as guests.

The boys, too, seem content to live and let live. Only in this spot, however; elsewhere the rabbits have a sorry time. Here is the birthplace of the 'kidding' mania, and since all these fur and feather folk are more or less human, harming them in any way would spoil the never-ending joy of weaving romantic yarns about their lives. I am told some wonderful stories of what goes on in the gravel-pit, and as the boys are there at night, when the moon shines, they probably do see more than I see. To most of us it is simply a vermin-infested hole; to them a valley of eerie enchantment, a creepy place, where one is glad of a pal's hand to hold when strange noises, faint and small, are heard, and shadows turn to living shapes. How well I know that night-feeling in the open; the rustle of unseen things; the sensation of being watched; the psycho-physical effect in the night of hidden power.

After dinner I often walk through the parklands called Fairyholm, and catch the reek of wood-smoke that tells me boys are in camp. Not the whole Gang, or you would hear them a mile off, but just the three, Dave, John, and Jim. They have a tinker tent in the old gravel-pit, and a fire has burnt down to a lazy glow. That is how I see it, and nobody is about. They are down at the burn, most likely, guddling trout for breakfast; two experts at the game, but I fancy Jim could teach them a thing or two. I know he could, this Jim upon whom I have all but set my foot. Who but a foreigner would be lying here when the rest are fishing?

Jim is a foreigner, that is to say he does not belong to our village, and would never have joined the Gang had it not been for Dave and John, who brought him along one day because they knew I collected curiosities. Jim has his own individuality, and they think him odd, worthy to be collected as a specimen. Away among the Cumbrian Hills he owns a parent called 'me dad,' a shepherd, a mine of wisdom about sheep and other things. Jim is always quoting him, and I think is slightly contemptuous of the rest who only have ordinary parents. His one other relative is an auntie who lives in our village, and with whom he resides during term-time. In the holidays he disappears into the misty blue. Week-ends he generally spends with the Gang.

There is a suspicion of misty blue in Jim himself, not physically, for he is lean, and tough, and hard; but his eyes have a misty look as though he were short-sighted or a dreamer. He is a dreamer, but his eyes are keen, missing nothing close at hand while seeming to be fixed on distant things. Dave and John consider him a bit queer, because he is not so frankly obvious as they are. That is why he is sometimes alone, not avoiding or avoided, but simply drifting in a backwater of his own while the rest sail by.

"Not down at the burn, Jim?" I ask. He says something about fox cubs, and I remember there is a litter in the old earth. But Jim has seen them, counted them, and watched them play for hours. He tells me of hill-foxes, foot-packs, and hunts across the fells and crags. "Me dad can tell a tale better than me," he ends; but I doubt it, and I cannot imagine anybody with the same slow, soft voice. Thick-head, Sleepy-head: one calls him by such names in sport, but he never turns a hair. Unruffled Jim, his wide grin shows even teeth that like to chew on blades of grass.

It is a tie between us that odd dialect words appeal to him as they do to me. This is unusual, and I cannot understand why they should. Dave and John see nothing strange in any of our local expressions, and fail to comprehend why they should cause other people to prick their ears and ask, why. They bring many things to me because they know I collect them, but word-collecting strikes them as a senseless hobby—nothing to put in a box, or keep on shelves; just a daft kind of inquisitiveness that amounts to a confession of ignorance. Jim trots out a word or phrase, then pauses expectantly. He may be only humouring me, but I do not think so.

His special subject is sheep, and he talks about them with deep, inherited lore. There is no kidding here, no make-believe; for sheep are serious facts not to be decorated with fancy attributes like stoats or starlings. They have sufficient character without superfluous additions; their faces are all different, and so are their personalities. Some sheep are muffy-faced—stupid—and some are bung-headed. You have only to enter for a sheep-dog trial to find all that out for yourself.

Long ago the shepherds had a way of counting: yan, tyan, it started, and there is a lot more I have forgotten, except as a confused jingle that sounds like a child's game or a spell to put one to sleep. Good names for terriers, Yan and Tyan, and Jim says it is right old talk his dad had from his grandad.

Yan, tyan. We are lying on our stomachs side by side. Jim's chin is propped on his fists, and the small of my back is beginning to ache. I shall be struck by lumbago, sciatica, or the rheumatics. "What are you going to be, Thick-head Jim, when you leave school?" Just sufficient pause to mark the stupidity of such a question, then he replies, "A shepherd."

Dave's heart runs to the beat of a motor-engine, and John wants to be a 'clurk'; but this chap will be a shepherd and nothing else, like his dad, his grandad, and his father before him. There must be a special charm about the hills and the sheep. I am beginning dimly to feel it. The valleys may alter, and the low-country may be transformed. New roads, new villages, new people, and a strange new language. Even Dave and John mince their words when they remember and wish to be polite; but Jim remains the broad-spoken man of the hills, unchanging as they are, just as solid. Thick-headed Jim, with his becks, tarns, and ghylls—fell-sides and screes; descriptive names that have withstood the centuries, and which will remain unaltered till the end of time. In this very Lowland bit of country dad's son stands out as typical of the hills as the Herdwick lambs that come to the sheep sales every spring. A foreigner he is; more at home, perhaps, in the hollow where we lie than in any other part of this alien realm.

He will grow into a rugged

man, a second edition of the father whom I have never seen, and he will be wise, too, with a wisdom unknown to 'clurks.' I do not know what he thinks of me, but we get on well together without deep intimacy. None of us is admitted beyond the threshold of friendship, and when he leaves us he will never come back. I shall miss his company on nights like these, and the Dominie will miss him by day.

When I speak to the Dominie about boys he gives me to understand I know nothing about them. We see boys from different angles, and my knowledge begins where his ends. It is a pity he should have the less attractive end. It is beyond the Dominie to invest with any romance the idea of boys in the mass, and though he may feel some regard for individuals such as Jim, the general effect of teaching has been to sour his outlook on youth.

My own particular Gang has no stomach for learning in school, and suffers from a kind of mental dyspepsia, necessitating doses of vile-smelling gums and gob-stoppers, with which they smear themselves and the desks. They must be trying, but the Dominie assures me he could give a fillip to their scholastic appetities, a sauce with plenty of bite in it, if he only dared; if he were only allowed. But they will not let him, and his scorn for the over-squeamish is unqualified. He hates parents because they are backed by the law, and he groans because the boys are backed by their parents. However lax parents may be at ordinary times they unite in stern disapprobation when their sons come home from school marked by the Dominie's strap.

The old days possess a glamour for the Dominie, and he continually laments the past. I cannot help thinking he mixes himself up with his father or grandfather, and that some of his personal experiences belong to a generation before he was born. If not, times must have altered with a jump.

Reminiscences and romances prevent his being utterly crushed by the weight of present impotence, and take his mind off the eternal grievances against the Educational Authority and the social system that interferes with his autocracy. The growth in humane methods towards children is but a slight on their teacher, and he is always receiving slights, and is always on the look-out for them. Left to himself he would not be a bully, but under the stress of forced humanity he becomes one. His sense of humour has taken a grim turn, so that it almost ceases to be recognisable as fun. And yet he is unconsciously funny at times. His nature-study classes produce bumble-bees in school, and things that crawl up the legs of his trousers and out of his desk. You can hear him shout far down the street, or see him rushing forth, with the class at his tail, to study nature in the more appropriate open. I hear these episodes related with gusto by the Gang, and it is just these cheering interludes that save the Dominie from total unpopularity.

Sometimes one may see little boys with brooms, sweeping the sidewalk in front of the school; a form of penance, I believe; or they may be digging the schoolmaster's garden. I often note these convicts at work, and they look up at me, grinning, while I grin in return. No word is exchanged, but we comprehend. This is punishment, and the Dominie is round the corner ready to quell any signs of relaxation. Poor Dominie; he has undoubtedly suffered in the past. In the days before modern heating arrangements, big Will Rae, whom he proposed to strap, knocked him into the fire. He bounced out again with a 'queer auld whirl,' and, coat-tails sizzling, felled Will Rae to the earth with one blow of his fist. Will relates that story now, and chuckles. He is an elder of the kirk, and so is the Dominie. Leaning over headstones in the kirkyard, they discuss the past before service on the Sabbath Day.

Hot-water pipes are comforting, but you can have bad luck with them, too. The Dominie threw a half-crown at a boy. It went down behind the pipes and he never saw it again. No wonder he spurns the idle rich and snorts about the meanness of his salary. 'Idle rich' is a favourite expression of his, and "differentiating in favour of ——," but he cannot explain why country boys are merely strapped across their hard and horny hands, while the sons of the idle rich get it with a cane on a much softer and more tender spot.

Sentiment the Dominie displays with regard to Robert Burns and no one else. He can grow quite maudlin over the national bard, and sing his songs with throaty quaver at suppers, where haggis affects his liver dreadfully. He eats it and drinks hot toddy he cannot bear. Next day the Gang are striped like zebras. For a whistling boy he has no mercy. A boy whistling in the passage is pretty sure to bring the Dominie bouncing out, and to have his ears soundly clouted for impudence. Singing is worse, and it is not of Robert Burns the urchins lilt. There is no mistaking words or intention.

"A. B. Buff. Gie the maister a cluff.
Gie him yin, gie him twa,
Daud his heed agin the wa'."

Or—

"Our school's a bonny wee school;
It's built wi' lime and plaister.
An' a' that's wrang wi' our wee school
Is the auld, bald-heeded maister."

"I'll make ye bald-headed!" says the Dominie, seizing the culprit by the hair, and there follows considerable bumping and scuffling in the passage; quite like the good old days.

In the great public schools

we may find a hero for worship among the masters, but very seldom in a village school. Hero-worship is not encouraged on either side, but the boys take rather a pride in the Dominie. It is war to the knife between them, yet he is virile, and they appreciate he-men. They even stick up for him at home when their parents abuse him as a bully and a brute. The boys themselves tell me the Dominie gets on much better with the lassies, because they play up to him, which is the obvious explanation to their simple, sexless minds that see no difference between a male and female teacher. A woman, except in notable instances, is weaker than a man, wherefore the boys take advantage of her, regarding her as a somewhat contemptible foe. There is nothing cowardly in this, and I believe the female teachers understand. At any rate, they seem to have a far better comprehension of boys, and to like them better than the men do. Boys know nothing of that, and go on making little beasts of themselves without discrimination.

Technically, all teachers are a class of soulless taskmasters, and what boys dare not show in their dealings with a man, a woman receives in full measure. Chivalry develops later in life, and woman comes into her own. The sweetheart couples on the railway bridge at night are anathema to the Dominie, but they are just the same boys who once mocked his female staff, and the same lassies who played up to him in days gone by. They are learning in another school things he could never teach them, and the clear-cut line between his influence in school and the outside influences in which he has neither part nor say, is never more marked than when linking couples go past him in the dark.

Young love and immorality are mixed up in his mind, and courting does not seem respectable. And yet he envies lovers, as, I dare swear, he envies me the gift of finding charm and fun in those who bring to him but a weariness of the flesh. I have deep pity for people such as the Dominie, who seem to have lost, or never to have had, so much that helps to make the world a happy place.

Of the Gang's parents and guardians, who add a little to the daily sum of the schoolmaster's troubles, I have only a shadowy impression. Fathers, mothers, aunties, and grandparents probably know and love their offspring and dependants. Old man, Old lady, He, She, or Them, is how I hear them talked about. Casual references, and casualness seems the most striking feature of domestic life. Homes vary, of course, and so do the results, but there are always spasms of reform in the worst regulated households. A woman decides to ‘rid up’ the house, wallop the family, and give her man some sound advice all at the same moment. The ensuing tornado temporarily wrecks the home and scatters its inmates far and wide. I can generally tell when such a visitation has descended on one of the Gang. His manner is slightly subdued, and he looks as though he had been scrubbed with something hard. To his pals he is a little surly, and there may be a flare-up about nothing. In some cases signs are revealed when he strips at the Douking Pool. "Didn't get out of the door quick enough," he may briefly observe with reference to the fine blue mark on his behind. "The old man," he will probably add, and one can picture the cowed 'old man' clutching at a chance to vindicate his authority sadly battered on the domestic hearth.

But it is the casualness of some parents that confounds one. There is one boy 'wanting an ee.' When he was a small child he went out to play with two eyes and returned with only one. Nobody knows what became of the other, whether he ran into something, or whether a friend knocked it out with a stone, and his parents took the matter with calm detachment as an unfortunate incident, like breaking a tea-cup.

Dick has a cheerful, ragamuffin type of countenance to which his blind eye adds a piratical, skull-and-crossbones expression. He tells me that when he is older they are going to get him a glass 'ee,' but that his father says there is no use getting him one now as he would only take it out and "play bouls with it." In the meanwhile he imagines himself a second Lord Nelson.

As a rule boys do not talk much about their homes, but every now and then a chance word dropped makes you gasp. A boy explained a bandaged fist by informing us that his mother had hit him with a carving-knife. He had annoyed her while she was cutting bread, and she just rapped him over the knuckles with what happened to be in her hand. The boy saw nothing strange in the occurrence, and I know this woman is a good and affectionate mother.

'Wee Wull,' who lives with grandparents, has neither affection nor goodness about him in his home. Sometimes he gets nothing to eat all day because he dare not show his nose near two drunken old terrors who threaten to beat the life out of him, and who would do so if they were given the chance. He takes refuge among the hazel-clumps along the river-bank, where he lurks, a hungry little animal, till some neighbour brings him food by stealth.

It has to be by stealth; for in a village the least interference with your neighbour's affairs leads to battle, murder, and sudden death. For a wonder, Wull does not steal, but he is so timid that a sudden movement makes him jump away like a young horse. I once shouted at him, forgetting who he was, and he ran for nearly a mile. The Gang is good to him, and for him. He needs all the goodness we can spare.

His father and mother are both dead; he can just remember them, and sings a queer little song he learnt from hearing his mother sing it. It was the only song she sang, a lament for the glories of a former life that could never have been very glorious.

"When I was a lassie I got sugar tae ma tea,
But eye syne I married—Eh dearie me!
Eh dearie me, sic a weary, weary life;
I'd rather be a beggar than a ploughman's wife."

Sometimes the first lines ran—

"When I was a maiden I had flounces on ma goun,
But eye syne I married they're a' hengin' doun."

Poor, draggled mother! When she died she was decently 'pit away,' and Wull was left to comfort his father, who did not know what to do with him. I think there was some story of a prosecution for cruelty; hanging Wull up in a sack to keep him out of mischief, and then forgetting about him, as far as I recollect. At any rate the father ended by growing heartily sick of his responsibilities, and got rid of them by taking ship to Canada, where he died. The old folk nurse a grudge against their late son-in-law, which they repay by knocking about the thread-paper body of wee Wull.

Cheerful, haphazard Gang; they adopted Wull as they might have befriended a stray kitten. Not with sentiment, but with a peculiar compassion of their own that seems made up of personalities and chaff. Wull does not mind being called a "wee tim'rous beastie," or jeered at because he hates the Douking Pool. They think him unaccountably modest because he will not strip in company, but modesty is not the only reason, and I am glad the Gang has never seen what those thin garments must sometimes hide.

These warriors consider themselves stoics with a great contempt for minor accidents. They are always hurting themselves, falling out of trees, slipping upon the rocks, or bashing their heads together. Most of them have been nearly drowned several times, and two of them all but poisoned by eating things that looked good. I do not know how they keep alive, but one thing scares them, and that is blood. As soon as blood begins to flow they turn pale green. Either the sight or smell of it affects them as it affects animals, only it never makes them savage; always subdued and pale green. I tell them this is a girlish weakness, and they grin awkwardly, doing something shortly afterwards that makes one positively sick with apprehension.

Young Butch—the butcher's son—must constantly see his father wallowing in gore, and yet he turned a delicate ultramarine the day I cut my foot. He said he would not have minded if it had been somebody else, which was charming flattery, though not perfectly true. Then he undertook to show me how wood ought to be tackled, and promptly pole-axed himself with the blunt side of the chopper.

That was in Quarry Glen, where we had gone to cut hazel rods for fishing-wands. The spirit of this wild and tumbled glen infected the Gang, as it always does, and stimulated their lawless natures. They melted into the undergrowth, appearing suddenly on perilous heights of rock, and disappearing again so quickly that one could not tell for certain whether they had fallen or flown. I was left with the hatchet chopping wands, till something took me in the eye. A perlie-winkie, they explained, and I was none the wiser when told that perlie-winkies were the same as shepies-and-youies. Later, I asked the Dominie, whose grin was wry but sympathetic. "The little fools mean cones—fir-cones," he said. Hard little cones, not the big soft ones from the spruce trees, and the name suits them well. They perl into your body under a ground-sheet, and there is something winkie in the way they hide till you have gone to bed. The shock of impact made me gash my foot; but a perlie-winkie in the eye redeemed the incident from being wholly tragic.

Young Butch, a lump on the back of his head and a rent in the seat of his breeks, makes me think of a fat, damaged kitten. He is never altogether whole, and has bits of rag perpetually round his fingers or knees. He falls into boilers among the pigs' food, and is the pride of his father's heart. He loves the Quarry Glen as I do, but for different reasons. This glen is a wilderness of ancient tips, mounds of rubble, and excavations, over which, wherever root-hold may be found, hazel, broom, and alder grow rampantly. Among the trees wind dozens of narrow tracks, running into one another or ending at the brink of cliffs.

One cannot stray in dreamy reverie through the glen; it is no place for absent-minded poets; but it is full of beauty and a queer charm of its own. There are also sinister impressions, and these are centred in a great pit at the bottom of which lies a blue-black pool. The rock-face rises sheer on two sides, fringed at its summit by tree roots and brambles; the third side is all broken up into masses like terraces and steps; the fourth, a bank of disintegrated sandstone covered in vegetation. On the steps and terrace side there are some fine, warm, basking spots, but nobody basks there because the pit has a bad name and looks unpleasant. The Gang avoid it.

One place among the rocks I am fond of, a spot that invites you to rest; a sun-trap where there is wild thyme and some creeping plant that smells good. It also lets you see right down to the bottom of the glen, at a point where a very sparkling burn runs past, crossed by stepping-stones between two miniature meadows, patches of green that have somehow escaped the quarry-tip and undergrowth. The pit is rather hidden, and one ignores it.

Sitting on a sandstone slab, moss-grown and scented, watching the jackdaws busy about the cliff-face, or the movements of a pair of sparrow-hawks, one grows lazy and inclined to drowse, but with one's faculties wonderfully alive to what is happening all round. It is a curious state in which nothing seems real, and yet the smallest thing is vividly impressed upon the senses. I should be called a liar if I told half the things I have seen or imagined in Quarry Glen.

As a rule I only see beasts and birds, but occasionally human beings intrude: a pair of lovers seeking Arcady among the thickets, or stray urchins. A section of the path beyond the stream is where one catches sight of them, and their reasons for coming are always obvious. A plate-layer from the railway, rod in hand. One look at the water is enough for him. It is too fine for fly-fishing, so he spits in the burn and goes away. Then from nowhere in particular come the guddlers: three or four boys, naked and brown as the hazel bark. They are lithe as otters and silently follow the stream, bending to feel under the flat stones where trout lie. I know they will stop at the stepping-stones, and they do; to dabble their feet in the current and count their spoil. Scraps of talk float up from them: the tale of big fish lost, an inevitable reference to school examinations, and a jumble of things like strap, gundy, mensuration, and gobstoppers. Conversation lozenges have gone out of fashion; you hardly ever see them, and as aids to courtship they have been superseded by chewing-gum. Teachers' desks are full of confiscated gob-stoppers, while lovers wandering by the burn have added to love's charms a rotatory motion of the jaws.

A hoot from the stepping-stones. Somebody has mentioned woman, a school-brat of the opposite sex. The sweet term, lass, has gone the way of conversation lozenges, and now it is nothing but 'wouman'—'weemen'—for mother, wife, or Maggie Ann aged twelve. There is a scrimmage at the crossing; cries of derision, and a few stones are thrown. The sexless have vindicated their manhood with clods of earth, and once more they are off, down the burn, out of sight beneath the alders.

Couples are not always young and lover-like. The other day an elderly pair came along. They must have strayed from a car on the road, and become involved in the glen. A track had brought them to the burn, and the stepping-stones were evidently something new to one of them—the man. He seemed to expect a bridge, and to resent there being none; but the woman was differently affected. Some romantic strain in her towny, haberdashery soul seemed touched. You could see it in her attitude, and almost hear the sigh with which she gazed about for an absent mill to complete the picture. There should always be a mill near stepping - stones, and a cottage where you might get a nice cup of tea and a rest. Town boots are bad for walking in glens. She should have been a bare-footed lass; slim as a willow, instead of being elderly and fat. Who knows? In a previous state she may have had a figure, charm, and rustic grace. The man could never have been much of a gallant lad at his best; but there may have been another, whose ghost the dancing lights and ripples recalled. A lad who would have waited for her at the stepping-stones. Mr Haberdasher did no such thing. He wanted beer, even as she pined wistfully for a nice cup of tea, but there was no touch of romance, of memory, or of fancy, to soften his material longings. He said something—rude, I guessed—as he pushed past to re-ascend the path, leaving her to follow gingerly in those town boots. Out of key with the glen, but fortunately rare.

Presently the guddlers will be coming back for their clothes, and they will not stop this time to argue about 'weemen.' The sun is dropping behind the trees, gilding the wa' heeds[1] and leaving my rock in shadow. The pool is taking on its sinister air, and the hollows an eerie suggestion. If I whistle they will come, Butch, Jim, Davie, and the rest of them, cheery imps with trout strung on a willow wand. They will see me home—set me down the road a bit—glad of my company to keep the bogles off.

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[1] Skyline.

RENSCHÖTSEL.

BY DOUGLAS AND MARY DIXON.

IT was a *flen* year, the winter the Davidsons were in Lapland.

When John Davidson sailed his little ship to the North-East Frostie Sea, he had planned that when the ice came he and his wife would spend the winter with the Mountain Lapps. The thought of wandering after migrating reindeer through the Arctic mountains appealed to him, and he had read somewhere of the dangerous spell with which Lapland can hold her visitors. He told Mrs Davidson that what he wanted was to experience and share the Lapps' life in the hardest time of the year, getting to know it as no summer tourist ever could. But he can hardly have imagined or desired the degree to which his wish was to be fulfilled. For *flen* is the most terrible disaster that can come upon the reindeer-herding tribes.

It was like this. Early in the autumn the frosts came to the mountains, and afterwards it snowed heavily on the frozen ground. There was good feeding for the reindeer and they throve well, digging with their feet through the dry, loose snow to find turf and reindeer moss. Most of the Lapps were then at their autumn camping ground, a hundred miles or more from the high *fjälls* to the westward and on the edge of the tree-line. They were in no hurry to move down into the forest while the reindeer were doing so well, and it would have been almost impossible to drive them before their own migratory instinct urged them to the lower feeding grounds. It was not then very cold, but around All Souls' Day there came a surge of warm air, lifted by a south-westerly gale over the high mountains between Norway and Sweden. Instead of snowing, it rained; a steady downpour that saturated the snow and the ground underneath, yet did not wash the snow away. Thaw and rain were succeeded by greater cold; after a day or two of uncertain weather, the temperature dropped sharply and the sodden snow froze like a sheet of iron, solid with the ground and all that grew on it. From the high camping grounds of Ultevis to the forest lands round the 'church village'—the winter lands of the mountain Lapps—all the grazing was covered with ice so hard that the reindeer could not dig through it. After that it began to snow again.

Down on the coast the Davidsons knew nothing of the *flen*. Although the distance to the mountains may be only a hundred and fifty miles, there can be entirely different weather there from that along the shores of the Bothnian Bay. The Davidsons were ignorant of what was happening in the mountains.

It is not easy to establish contact with the Lapp tribes at the flitting - times of spring and autumn. They follow traditional paths and their various camping grounds are well known, but their movements are uncertain. For instance, in the summer, the Davidsons had been able to take advantage of an excellent system of boats up the lakes and rivers to the high glaciers, and had reached a Lapp camp with the minimum of physical effort or discomfort. In the autumn it was one thing to put a finger on the map and say "the Lapps are probably here now," and quite another to get there. The special communications for summer tourists ended in September, railways went so far, good roads ran even farther, and then there was nothing but skis and their own efforts to carry them into a trackless wilderness.

So when the Davidsons left their little ship in the ice-bound *fjard* and crossed the Arctic Circle bound north-west, they knew nothing of the *flen*. But they sensed an indefinable difference in the country. Already, in the last days of November, the sun was dropping behind the foothills, although it was only a few minutes past noon by the clock. The highway was clearly now a superficial wound on the essential loneliness of the forest. They were in a silent, darkening land, shut in by timber, hushed by snow, lit only by reflection. A curious coppery flame ran slowly up to the tops of the northern pines. It was the last sunlight they were to see for many weeks.

The closing days of November and the early part of December were dangerous days in the Lapland mountains. Blizzard after blizzard swept the hills; there was little light, and though the temperature rose again to somewhere between twenty and thirty degrees below freezing, the bitter winds made it seem colder than before. The Davidsons did not find it easy to get to the Lapps. There was some uncertainty about the best route, difficulty in finding a hunter from an upland settlement who would take the responsibility of being their guide, and finally, a two days' exhausting journey through forest valleys, over frozen swamps, and up the storm-swept mountainside. When they reached the *kåta* place late on the second day, they had done well, considering their inexperience, but they were at the end of their strength.

The Lapp camp lay beneath the great *fjälls* of Stuor Njuoskes and Juovakielas, just below the tree-line on the southern slope of the mountains. There were five families and five turf *kåtor*, decapitated cones of tree-trunks and turf, looking like outsize ant-hills covered with snow, a thin, blue line of smoke coming out of the top of each. Inside, the pinewood fire in the centre had burned low, but although it was rather dark it was still possible to see the Lapp girl, rosy cheeked, with long swinging plaits, rocking a cradle suspended from a cross beam. The Davidsons left their skis outside and moved diffidently to the guests' place at the left side of the fire. New reindeer skins were spread for them on the springy carpet of fir twigs, hot coffee was handed round, and John Davidson had his first lesson in Lapp life—that he should remove his cap only when drinking coffee. There was no one else in the *kåta* except one old dog. In fact, the whole camp was deserted but for two other women, one old, the other also tied to a young child. All the men, the girls, and most of the dogs were out on the *fjälls* trying to collect the deer.

On some of the higher mountains it had not rained all the time, but snowed a little, so that the *flen*, or ice crust, was less hard; on other steeper places the snow had been washed away here and there, and the bare ground had frozen again and been covered by new loose snow. The deer had scattered widely in search of food, and now they were growing hungry it would not be possible to hold them together. Tomorrow the Lapps would round up all they could collect, separate them into family herds, and so begin the trek to lower feeding grounds. John Davidson learnt all this little by little as their hunter-guide talked with the Lapp woman in Lappska. When it had been interpreted to him in Swedish, he told Mrs Davidson that they were lucky to have got there in time for the round-up and to be able to share in the 'flitting.'

"What we've got to do," he said, "is to find out all we can about the Lapps' life and the herding of the reindeer—what the Swedes call *renschötsel*. We want to know what they do and why they do it, whether it's tradition or just common-sense, and we mustn't be afraid of asking questions."

Presently, however, he began to understand about the *flen*. As the other two talked, the magnitude of the disaster became clear; for the settlers lower down had not known that already on the mountains the reindeer were short of food, and the Lapps had not known that the ice crust extended so far through the forest. Yet when late that day their host, Nils Torda, came in with his exhausted dogs, their coats full of wet snow, the Davidsons still understood so little that they were surprised at their welcome. They did not know that every help, unskilled or not, would be needed to save the herds. They crouched by the blazing fire, dipped with their fingers in the common pot of reindeer meat, watched while other Lapps came in, and had council with Nils about the morrow. Only as the *kåta* folk slept under their heavy skins did Mrs Davidson begin to suspect that though they had joined the Lapps for their own interests, they would stay for their hosts'.

After the storm, the next day was calm and clear, but very cold again, fifty or sixty degrees. It was still dark, with the stars showing bright through the wide smoke-hole, when activity started. First, Sigga Torda had rekindled the fire and made coffee; then Nils had eaten, stuffed dry grass into his shaggy reindeer-skin boots, and slipped away. Before the Davidsons were ready to set out he had relieved his brother from watching the reindeer and sent him back for sleep. As Pavve staggered in, they stumbled out into the snowy dark that is never quite dark and began to climb stiffly above the trees to the reindeer corral, four miles away on the dim, white heights. And now, as the night retreated a little, all the snow in the distance was splashed with blue and red, where parties of Lapps from neighbouring camps were making their way up the *fjäll*. They stopped, a few of them, on a little knoll to make a fire and cook coffee, but before the Davidsons had caught up with them they were on the move again. Then, as they hurried on, what looked like a dense cloud of smoke poured over the shoulder of the hill. As they were breasting the last rise, they saw the cloud swerve right-handed. All at once it was driven by the dogs into the stockade, not a single stray outside.

"Oh," said Mrs Davidson, "I most particularly wanted to see the deer driven in." She stopped to watch them, milling round the corral, the thousands of swaying antlers and the steam rising from their bodies still giving the illusion of a low-hanging cloud. John would not let her linger.

"Come on; we've got to work now and we're late already."

But work did not start at once. The Lapps who had been herding left the deer and settled down to rest and eat before the hard work of separation. A ring of bright little fires sprang up outside the corral, and groups of men and dogs gathered round sizzling reindeer meat. The Davidsons shared a fire and their own supplies of chocolate and raisins, while they amused themselves trying to determine from where the various little parties had come. There were the new Sirkas tribes from Stor Lule, still called Karasuendo, though it is many years since they left that district on the Finnish border. They had shorter tunics of brighter blue, with more flamboyant, stand-up collars, and more slashing trimmings of gold and red. There were many different groups of the older Sirkas tribes, in long tunics of dull grey or green, trimmed with narrow bands of colour denoting family or camp, their women in the becoming high cap of dark blue. Even the dogs round the fires had their own story to tell; from one camp they were all black; from another, grey or brindled; and the Stor Lule Lapps had one or two pure white.

In half an hour from the first kindling of the fires the work of separation began. There were four thousand deer in the stockade, too big a herd to be driven to the lowlands, even with many drivers and good dogs, so it must be split up to let each family take its own. Then there were strays, too, which had got lost in the summer wanderings, and it was well for other camps to find and take them while they could. The big central stockade had six smaller pens opening from it, and the first job was to get these strays weeded out. For a few minutes the Davidsons watched to see what they could do, but the drill was simple. One of a party guarded the opening to the small pen, while the others ran into the closely packed herd, singled out a deer with a throw of the *kastrep*, and dragged him to the enclosure. The affair seemed to be conducted much in the spirit of a fast game of football. The deer were not yet so weak with hunger as not to struggle hard when caught by the lasso, and full-grown reindeer were nearly always stronger than the little mountain men. In fact, every single one gave his captor as much trouble as he possibly could. Occasionally a captured deer would lie down and be unceremoniously dragged into the pen by legs and antlers. More often he snorted with indignation, stood on his hind-legs, and pranced and jumped with rage. It was worst of all when he stood with all four feet braced and head lowered, resisting every attempt to pull him in the desired directions. Those that danced and kicked had to be played with the long rope until the Lapp was able to catch a turn round one of the posts of the stockade, but those that passively resisted needed a shove from behind to stir them into activity. John, who was strong in the arms, found his work tailing on to lassos. Their guide did the same, and got a nasty cut on the mouth when a deer caught him unaware and pulled him rolling through the snow, now trodden into fine, brown powder. Mrs Davidson joined the other women and put in her time pushing against obstinate hind-quarters, while keeping a wary eye on the spread of antlers. As they worked and pulled and shoved, Nils Torda would now and again shout and wave cheerily to them. For this part of the preparation for the trek eastward was a jolly game, and though the deer were frightened and cross, once they had been hauled into their pen and slipped loose they trotted off peacefully enough to join their companions.

And John was learning, learning tricks and knowledge that, though he did not know it, would stand him in good stead in the coming days. He learned to know the bulls, who had cast their antlers after rutting, from the gelded *härks* with their huge heads. He learned how to hang on to a *kast-rep* and not lose his deer. He saw some calves marked, brutally enough, with slices cut clean out of the ear, and at least he learnt to know and recognise Nils Torda's mark. When merchants came ski-ing over the *fjälls* to buy deer for slaughter, he learnt that only the larger bulls and old *härks* would be sold, so that by the end of the winter the herd would consist of does, year-old calves, and a few small bulls.

The separation had started about nine in the morning, and at two, when there was still some light, the stranger Lapps took their strays away. They knocked down the outer wall of their small pens and one from each camp fastened a bell and a long rope to the throat of a *härk* and led away on his skis calling, "Ko . . . Ko . . . Kooh!" And the drivers closed in behind, the dogs running on the outside of the bunch of deer to keep it together. John watched them and heard how they ordered the dogs to bring in stragglers, and later he knew this was the most important thing he learned at the round-up.

Now the strangers had gone, the work started again; for the remaining herd was yet too big to be driven together and must be split up once more. There was still some light. It had been a good day, with little wind and only the lightest of snow falling. Once or twice the dull clouds had lifted to show a softly dappled sky and occasionally a mountain peak, tenderly flushed with an after-sunset light. As the twilight of day changed to dark again, it grew much colder, and Mrs Davidson complained of frozen hands and feet. John had to break off to rub them for her, but it did not occur to either of them to pack up and go back to the *kåta*. The herd in the big stockade thinned rapidly; for the deer were tired now and no longer gave so much trouble. Soon after three it was too dark to see any longer, and the remaining deer would have to stay where they were for the night. One of the other Lapps was staying to watch them. Before the Davidsons left the corral they heard the faint distant howl of a wolf.

"Yes," said Nils Torda, "there is a small pack on the *fjäll*. That is why one must watch the deer although they are in the corral."

By the next morning John Davidson had begun to see that although it is a pleasant thing to live as the Lapps in the summer, when the reindeer graze freely on the mountains and the sun shines for twenty-four hours a day, it is neither pleasant nor easy to be a Lapp in the winter. Already the evening before, when they got back tired from the round-up, there had been much work to be done for the flitting. While they had been away, Sigga had fetched out some of the small sleds and *pulkor* and filled them with enough rolls of shoegrass to last for the rest of the winter, and rolled-up skins from the reindeer which had been killed and eaten earlier in the autumn. These were for sale when they reached a settlement or village. In other sleds were ready-packed sacks of reindeer hair and horn which were also to be sold. Then they must be busy getting more sleds out for packing, and while the young hunter chopped wood for the *kåta* fire, Nils Torda and John had gone to get the stores of meat from the curious raised store-house of sticks and branches which the Lapps build out of reach of wild animals. Here they had fetched down frozen steaks and haunches, reindeer stomachs filled with fat, and sausages filled with blood and flour. These all went in the meat sled, were covered with cloth, and turned upside-down in the snow to keep the dogs from getting to the meat. The *tält kåta*, the light cloth tent, was then got ready, the cloths, the door, and a snow-shovel bound into a special sled, and the poles and reserve skis lashed to a toboggan. By the time they had stopped toiling in the bitter night and gone into the *kåta* for their last meal of reindeer meat and unleavened bread, John felt as though he had not stopped or rested since leaving the coast. It was, of course, much harder for him than for the Lapps or their young guide. He was unused to the cold, he was unaccustomed to ski-ing; when he went with Nils Torda to get a sled or to fetch meat, he missed the trampled path in the darkness and found himself floundering about in soft, deep snow. Every muscle was aching with cold and exhaustion, but he kept at it, to Nils Torda's surprise and gratitude. He had quite forgotten that he had joined the Lapps for his own purposes and had become part of the general struggle to get the herds down to the coast alive. If he had thought about it at all, he would have said it was like saving a ship in distress.

Of course, if it had not been a *flen* year and this an ordinary late autumn round-up, the Davidsons would have found this evening in particular a very jolly one, the camp full of visiting Lapps, and everyone paying ' calls ' and popping in and out like rabbits in a warren. But, oddly enough, they enjoyed it as it was, in a sort of a way, even John. Nils' brother, Pavve, was a grand fellow at making fires, and brought tree after tree to the hearth until the flames leaped up almost to the smoke-blackened timbers above. Lying stretched on their skins, the Davidsons had watched the ring of faces round the fire, swarthy, slant-eyed, and quick; Sigga with her high blue cap, her baby tucked in its hair-lined cradle, and dogs everywhere, jumping here and there and sometimes biting people's feet as they fought over bits of meat and bone dropped among the twigs underfoot. It came to Mrs Davidson then, that afterwards for all their lives they would remember how soft and good the skins were to lie on after a day on the *fjälls*, and how bright and lovely the leaping flames. They would forget that, for all the great fire, the air in the *kåta* was so cold that the milk and other food was hard frozen, and icy draughts swept along their backs.

After the round-up, the flitting. In spite of the work they had done in the evening, everyone was up earlier than ever. "We must sleep with shoes on," the young hunter told the Davidsons with a grin, or, as Nils put it more picturesquely, "We must get up as early as sparrows and set out after the herd's tails."

This time, Nils and his brother and the hunter lad all went off together to get the separation finished, and the Davidsons stayed to help Sigga finish the packing. There was still much to do. Traces and harness had to be taken from the *puogge*, another curious store built on two legs with iron barbs in them to keep out wolverines. All the cooking-pots, the great hanging stew-pot, the water bowls, and wooden milk bottles had to be put into a special sled and lashed down, and the same with the reindeer and sheep skins that had been in use. They worked steadily and in haste by the light of flares of birch bark, and were barely finished when they heard the calls "Ko . . . Ko . . . Kooh" and the barking of the dogs driving the herd down to the *kåta* place.

And now it was full twilight again and snow was falling. "Bad weather on the *fjäll*," said the hunter, shaking his head, but for all that they must go. They ate their last meal in the turf *kåta* on the edge of the mountain, drank some coffee greased and flavoured with reindeer cheese, warmed and waxed their skis over the last of the fire. Now the tame draught *härks* were caught and brought to the row of sleds to be harnessed; ticklish work; for they were not so tame that they did not plunge wildly when an unknown hand fumbled with the trace, and Mrs Davidson had a narrow escape from being run through. Before the trains of sleds were ready the herd was driven off, Pavve leading the bell *härk* and calling to the dogs. John found himself a drover in the rear with the young hunter to help him out.

It was not so bad at first. Pavve led the way through scrub and thicket, and they did not go too fast. Even so, it was hard for John to run round his edge of the herd and see that no stragglers were left behind. What made it so difficult was that the herd went at a steady moderate pace, and if he slipped climbing a steep hillock or got his ski-bindings caught in the scrub, as he often did, it was very hard to catch up again. But even in the edge of the forest there were signs of trouble with the herd. The deer were hungry and already some does with their calves kept trying to slip away and look for tree *lav*, the black hair-like fungus that grows thickly on dead branches high up. Luckily the dogs were fresh and worked well, so they did not lose any then.

The sled trains behind were also in trouble; for there were two untamed *härks* to be broken in by tying them to the last sleds in each train, and at first they would not go quietly, but ran to the side, pulling the sleds round, sticking their antlers into them and breaking the lashings. But after a bit the scrub ended and the way ran through a little rocky valley with steep walls. Here they got the trains moving better. Things were just beginning to go more smoothly when they reached the open *fjäll* and met the storm; wind seized them and hurled them back, and swirls of snow beat on their faces and blinded them.

For another two hours Pavve led on, climbing painfully, with the trains winding astern. But the storm was increasing, and by the time darkness fell they found they could no longer struggle against it. Pavve shouted something and the herd turned right-handed following his ringing "Ko . . . Kooh . . ." They were descending, and John found himself sailing headlong into bushes and rocks in the darkness. It was a wonder he did not break his skis. The open slope yielded again to trees, and they came to a little frozen beck where they prepared to camp for the night. Tired as they were already, there was no respite from work. Dry wood must be cut for a fire, and trees cut down to feed the deer on the *lav*. When the trains of little sleds arrived, the *kåta* was set up, armfuls of fir-twigs collected for the floor, skins and cooking-pots unpacked, and home once more established in the face of a pitiless world. All night the storm raged over the mountains, lashed the moaning tree-tops, and sent snow dropping hissing on to the fire. But inside, the smoky little tent seemed a miracle of warmth and comfort, and the Davidsons slept soundly under the heavy skins.

Next morning the weather was a little better, and long before light the *kåta* was down again, and John had distinguished himself by catching one of the tame *härks* with the lasso. The herd was driven up to the *fjäll*. In spite of the tree *lav*, which is not really very nourishing, hunger was beginning to tell on the deer, especially on the calves and the bulls, thin and weak after rutting. They went more slowly, and early in the day some came to a stop. It was hard to urge them on, and when they got going it was only a few moments before some stopped again. Of course, it was not so difficult for John to keep up in these conditions, but, on the other hand, he had much more work in driving them on. Even the dogs found it tiring, and eventually they were too tired to bark. Then the Lapps had to let the herd wait while they made a little fire in a thicket of dwarf thorn trees and warmed some food for themselves and the dogs.

The hot meal revived the dogs at once, but it was pathetic to see the deer trying to dig through the ice crust and sticking their noses into the snow, only to turn away defeated. Now that the snowfall had stopped, it was possible to see around, and a grim world John found it: wide stretches of grizzled forest, vast untrodden lakes, peak upon peak of dim cloud-hung hills. The snow lay in a flat, white sheet, without shadow or contour. It was like a dead world, drained of colour and light, the very exaltation of desolation. There was nothing for the eye to rest on but the starving deer.

That day they pressed on as fast as they were able, and in the evening they did not wait for the *kåta* trains but still went on, passing from the mountain into the forest. Just as it was growing dark they had to leave the first of the tiring deer, a calf that could go no farther. "What will happen to it?" asked John. The hunter shook his head. "Perhaps the *kåta* people will find it tonight and feed it. Otherwise it will die of hunger or the wolves will get it." And so they left it, as the Lapps themselves in olden days had to leave their old and sick when they could not keep up.

They pressed on, through endless forest, over frozen swamp land where dead trees pointed gaunt, black fingers to the sky. John was thankful enough for the dim moon; for now in the forest any little thing, a tree or a snow-laden branch swayed by the deer in front, was enough to turn a bunch of does to one side, and he must go tripping over half-buried bushes, afraid of getting lost and left behind himself, and see them turned safely back.

Just after the first colours had come in the southern sky, where somewhere over the horizon the sun was rising, the herd reached the first clearing of Swedish settlers. There was no grazing to be had here, for the *flen* extended far through the forest; but Pavve proposed to wait and let the herd feed as well as they could on tree *lav* until the sled trains arrived. This time they did not cut down any trees. There was plenty of *lav*, and the snow was not yet so thick that the deer could not wander about, nibbling what they could reach. So Pavve let them go loose, and the hunter went back to his own home in the same clearing, taking John with him.

The sled trains came that same day, but late in the evening. They had not been able to journey through the night; for the *härks* had tired, pulling their loads over the rough trodden snow. Sigga's baby, tucked cradle and all into a hair-lined *pulka*, had wailed pitifully as it was jolted all day over uneven track, thrown endlessly from side to side. Towards evening it quietened ominously, giving only feeble whimpers, and it was just as well that they had to halt. As soon as the *kåta* was set up and a fire kindled, Sigga was able to take the child out of its wrappings and warm it by the fire. Like the dogs, it seemed to recover quickly, but Mrs Davidson was told that many Lapp children had slipped down in their wrappings and died of suffocation during the long treks.

Next day they found some of the calves that had been left behind. A few had been able to wander away to look for food, but most of them had stayed close to the track. To take them along, it was necessary to unhitch the spare *härks* from behind the last sleds and tie the calves in their place, and even so, they could not all be taken. Some had to be left, with a felled tree to feed on. It all meant more work and more delay, so that by the time the settlement was reached it was not only dark but pretty late. They had had a moon all day, but as it grew darker, so, curiously, they had the illusion of more light. There were shadows again for the first time since the Davidsons had left the coast, and the brilliant moonlight drew every detail of their track in deep indigo on a sparkling silver cloth. If there had been any to see it, their arrival must have been a perfect Christmas spectacle. There was no sound but the bells on the reindeer; the moon blazed fiercely down on a silent world, where no wind whispered in the forest, no tree branch stirred or berry fell. The first of the train swung round the curve between the waiting trees and wound slowly through the snowy hills, where a few lights still glowed redly in settlers' homesteads. But there was no one to see them come, no one to welcome them, and no one to help them outspan the weary deer and unpack the sleds. At least, however, the *kåta* had not to be set up again; for even the Lapps would lodge with settlers and sleep on skins on the kitchen floors.

Now that they had reached a settlement, and what was more, a road-head, one part of the flitting was over. Sigga and the baby, with the household possessions, could make their way to the church village by car, and the sleds be left in store till next spring. In fact, Sigga was looking forward to a fairly comfortable and lazy time lodging with some settler for two or three months. But as regards the herd, the work had barely started. Two days it had taken them to cover about thirty miles, and there were more than a hundred still to go before they reached the coast. Of course, not all the deer were strong enough to make the journey . . . the worst were left for Pavve to bring on as he could, and Nils Torda started off again immediately with about two hundred of the strongest. He had only John Davidson to help him now, for the young hunter had work of his own to see to; but Mrs Davidson brought up the rear with a short train of *härks* pulling sleds of provisions, skins, and the *kåta*.

This second stage of the journey took them a week, and it was a week of unceasing fight against wind and snow. The way at first was down the highway to the church village, where they had some protection from the forest, but after that they had to drive the deer along the frozen river, which was just a funnel for the east wind. It snowed every day, so that they never had the chance to look about them, and the wind froze their cheeks, noses, and hands. During this journey they knew nothing of day or night—there was not much difference—but pushed on as long as the dogs would bark. When the dogs failed or the deer could not be driven any farther, they stopped, felled trees in the forest at the side of the river, set up the *kåta*, and got some rest.

Nils Torda himself was tireless, but long before the first halt was called John Davidson and his wife were staggering along in a half-conscious condition, pushing their skis mechanically as if their legs and feet had grown to be part of them. Fortunately, their usual way of life at sea had made them reasonably tough, and by this time they had already had a week to acclimatise themselves. Indeed, when they came to look back on this journey to the coast, the long push had its high lights. It was not all monotonous slogging, battling against an unrelenting wind in a thick snowy darkness. There was the growing mastery of this new way of life. Mrs Davidson learnt to inspan and outspan her train of deer, to pack and lash up the sleds, and to help expertly in the setting up and taking down of the *kåta*. John learnt to kindle a fire with birch bark and something about felling trees. He learnt that it is little use trying to melt snow for water, it being truer economy of effort to go to a frozen beck or lake and break the ice. He learnt how to approach reindeer without scaring them. He learnt to shout to the dogs in Lappska, "*Kait taapèla,*" and get them to do as he ordered. And he developed a real comradeship with Nils Torda.

In the few glorious moments of relaxation over the open fire or in the *kåta*, Nils was a fund of good stories and jests. There, across the river, was a tumbledown log cabin, where the 'Underground People' plagued anyone who defied them and slept there . . . yes, they even poured water on the fire and put it out. Just up that valley on the right was a bear hide—no, they were not allowed to hunt the bear now; but the bear was a mysterious animal—one must be careful how one spoke of him. In graver moments, Nils talked of the *flen* itself and the attendant ills which might follow it; the *sendrag* sickness, when the reindeer gets a kind of muscular cramp and cannot eat; miscarriages amongst the does, and sickly calves to be born next summer. There was little need now to explain to the Davidsons what a disaster the *flen* was to the Lapps. They knew that the herd was Nils Torda's whole wealth, and every day they saw more deer tire, unable to go on. At first they tied them behind Mrs Davidson's string of sleds and tried to force them as they had done with the calves. But what was the good? In the end they could not take all. "What happens to a Lapp who loses his herd?" asked John Davidson. "He must stop flitting," said Nils. "He must stay by the lakes or in the forests and fish or hunt, or become a servant to other Lapps or to Swedes. He can hardly ever build up a herd again to follow them."

So they came down below the Salmon Falls past the junction of the Great and Little Lule Rivers, and here at last the *flen* stopped and the snow lay loose on clean, frozen ground; and not only that, but the reindeer moss was long and good. They could not stay at this place; for there were already other Lapps with their herds, and not enough pasture for all, but things became easier. They trekked only by day now and rested for long periods when it grew dark. The hungry deer fed well. They seemed miserably few, though; in fact, over a hundred had been saved, and there was good hope that Pavve might bring down many of those that had been left behind. In a year when many Lapps lost their whole herds, Nils Torda had been relatively fortunate, and there was no doubt that he owed a good deal to the Davidsons' patient co-operation.

But when they had almost reached the coast there was no real reason why the Davidsons should stay any longer. They had made their plans to board with a settler outside the church village after the flitting should be over, and there was much there of festival, market, and Lapp administration that they proposed to learn. Their help with the reindeer was not necessary any more. Nils Torda told them that he and his brother would take it in turns to watch the herd during the winter, and in his 'off watches' he would go back to Sigga.

But none the less they stayed on, waiting for Pavve. They found they had an interest in the herd now that they had helped to save it, and certainly Nils was as conscious as they of the bond between them. So Mrs Davidson cooked in the smoky little *kåta* in the forest, and every day John practised with the *kast-rep* and ran round the outermost tracks of the feeding herd to keep them together. In the end, it was just as well that they did stay; for there was still one more service that John was to do for his host.

They had been in the forests nearly a week when Nils Torda said he thought he would go back with all but one of the dogs and try to collect some of the deer left behind and possibly join up with Pavve. The herd of reindeer that had been saved were feeding peacefully and well; there was plenty of food and no need to move them anywhere for at least another week, so that it would not be difficult for John to run round and keep a general eye on them. The Davidsons received this information with mixed feelings. They were naturally rather cock-a-hoop at their promotion, but they were not quite happy about the responsibility.

"It's all very well," said John doubtfully, "but I shouldn't know what to do if anything went wrong."

"Well, I don't see why anything should go wrong," Mrs Davidson said reasonably. "They seem all right now, and Nils says it's only for three days. Surely we've had all the bad luck that's coming to us!"

Did some malicious Fate or troll hear that reckless challenge? John Davidson was always warning her to be careful what she said. At any rate, the very day after Nils Torda had left them in proud and anxious solitude John pushed open the *kåta* door, kicked the snow off his boots, and sat down to his coffee with a grave face.

"The wolves have come down."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs Davidson incredulously; "not right down here? I thought they never came even as far as the church village nowadays."

John Davidson grunted. He was more disturbed than he liked to say. There had been plain signs of trouble when he went round the herd that afternoon. All along one track he had found blood splashes on the snow, tufts of hair on the branches, and at last two dead does, their hind-quarters bare and bloody and their heads and throats torn. They were hardly at all eaten, however.

"Well, what are we going to do?"

"That's just the trouble," said John. "The Lapps always have rifles, Nils has his with him now, and all we've got is this old Webley ·45 of mine, and that's not a lot of good. I'd never get near enough. But I can't understand it at all. The dog didn't howl today as you'd think he would, and there must be plenty of food higher up with all the deer we left behind; and other Lapps' herds, too. You wouldn't think they'd come down here unless they were desperate with hunger. And I only saw one set of tracks. I feel so green about all this. Well, there's only one thing to do. I'll go round the herd again this evening, and if there's any trouble I must go to the nearest settler and ask him for a rifle and a spot of help."

When John set out again after dark, and after a good deal of revolver practice that had cheered him considerably, Mrs Davidson decided that she was coming with him.

"I don't suppose they'd attack the *kåta* with all the deer round," she said, "but I just don't feel like staying here alone and missing all the fun."

"Well, we'd better leave the dog," said John, "or I might shoot him by mistake, and that wouldn't be so good."

They went out into a still, cold night with little moon but brilliant starlight. Softly through the forest they heard the bell of a *härk* and the curious grunting of the deer. "They seem peaceful enough." "Yes, but we can't tell; they separated those two does away from the others," explained John irritably. He was feeling both worried and foolish, with his ignorance and his inadequate equipment, his old ·45, a *kastrep*, and a big Lapp knife. This time they went cautiously round the herd, listening, watching; it was difficult to see in the close trees, and the ground was very uneven; piled boulders, sudden drops, and deep caves in the snow, where the reindeer had been digging for moss. In spite of practice, they moved clumsily on their skis in the darkness. Presently the ground fell away in a gentle slope to a small lake. John started the run with relief, and as they went they heard the first sound of warning—a high-pitched yelp and then low, fierce growls. The sound came from the lake.

And now they hurried, pressing forward with arms and sticks until they reached the smooth, open space and could see what was happening.

It was a *härk* that stood at bay, sunk belly-deep in the snow, and they could just see the sweep of its antlers and the low, lithe form that sprang and sprang again past the antlers and sank its teeth, growling, in the deer's throat. They ran forward, skis hissing on the light crust, but no warning reached the struggling pair. John snatched revolver from holster and drew nearer, Mrs Davidson close behind. She had just thought: "It's funny it doesn't seem to know we're here——" when they both saw and cried out. It was no wolf, but a dog, and not even a rough Lapp hound with something of the wolf about it, but one of those big, smooth, bullet-headed, tailless brutes, more often seen in South Sweden than in the north and notorious for their fierceness. Certainly John was taken aback, and now he did not know what to do. He did not like to shoot the dog, but it was big and fierce enough to be nearly as dangerous as a wolf after all. He hesitated, handed the revolver to Mrs Davidson, and slipped the *kast-rep* off his shoulder. Just as he did so the *härk* caught the dog with the points of his antlers and flung it back nearly to the Davidsons. In that moment John threw the rope over the crouching body, and oh! miraculous reward of much practice, the noose fell true over its head and tightened on its neck.

"And what do we do now?" said Mrs Davidson. The dog, half choked, was lying at their feet, quiet enough. The *härk*, exhausted and bleeding, was still standing in the trampled snow, with lowered head and heaving flanks. It would not let John get near enough to look at its throat, but its hind-quarters were torn just like those of the does.

"We must leave it. We may want to show it to the dog's owner, and I don't know enough to tell if it will have to be killed or if it will recover. The first thing is to do something about the dog. There's a settler's house a bit to the south, I think, but I don't know if we can find the way there."

The dog settled that problem. As soon as the noose was loosened a little he had only one thought, to run home, and with the other end of the rope made fast to his collar he pulled John along a good deal faster than he liked. None the less, it was a good hour before they reached the homestead, quiet and still in a clump of trees, one light showing in a downstairs window.

The Davidsons slipped off their skis, brushed off the snow, and went inside. They suddenly began to feel rather uncomfortable.

"Is this your dog?" asked John haltingly of a big, fair giant of a fellow; "it's just been killing some of my reindeer."

"YOUR reindeer?" said the settler in justifiable astonishment; for it was plain that he had two foreigners as visitors, and John had to try to explain himself and his peculiar position as temporary herdsman to Nils Torda.

Poor John Davidson. He did not know what he had let himself in for. In the first place, he learnt that Nils Torda had brought his herd outside the Lapp Mark and into the area reserved for settlers only. Then he discovered that the settler had a very real grievance about the way the reindeer were eating up his reindeer moss. John Davidson had imagined that the moss was of no value except to the deer. He found he was wrong. It was a source of revenue to these coast settlers, who sold it for export to Germany, where it was made into a kind of coarse meal. Instead of John Davidson warning the settler that if he had trouble with the dogs again he would shoot them, he was told to take the herd back into the Lapp Mark!

"I can't do anything," he explained doubtfully. "Nils Torda will have to fix that up with the Lapp Commissioners." And then Mrs Davidson took a hand.

"But the reindeer must stay here. There's no food anywhere else; that little bunch is all we've got down out of three hundred we started with . . ."

"WE'VE got down?" said the settler curiously, and with a twinkle that she was quick to see.

"Yes . . . we . . . all the way from Ultevis . . . and it blew and snowed, and all the time the deer were starving. . . ." She told him the tale of the trek, and even in her halting Swedish, John Davidson knew again the struggle and the desperation and the despair of those days and nights, when the snow blew in soft cold flurries against their faces, the wind lashed them . . . knew the ache of half-frozen face and hands, the pitiless driving of worn-out beasts and men . . . the starving beasts dropping out or searching hopelessly for food when there was none. The Swedish settler knew it, too. He listened, silent, or nodding a little in sympathy, and his wife came over from the hearth, wiping her hands in a big snowy apron, and listened too. And suddenly the Davidsons realised that these folk were kindly enough, but did not know the difficulties of the Lapp's life as did the settlers higher up in the mountains.

At last the settler spoke. "Jo, it's hard for beasts in such a year. But it's all right here. The Lapps must arrange it about the moss."

"Yes," said Mrs Davidson boldly, "but what about the dogs? We didn't get those starving deer down here to have them killed by dogs."

And indeed they had almost forgotten the dog, now lying peaceably by the hearth. John Davidson waited, and no one said anything. The settler did not like it, but he gave in. "I'll keep them tied up."

So peace was made, and the Davidsons drank coffee and were laughed at for their absurd ideas of wolves . . . "though I have heard that a lot of hungry wolves are coming over from Russia!" They saw the new baby, the long-looked-for heir to the homestead. They learnt something of the difficulties of a Lapland settler's life, too, in these days of low prices for timber and furs. They talked of stalking seals over the ice of the Bothnian Sea, and in the end they did not get away until they had promised to come back as soon as Nils Torda should turn up again and relieve them.

When they were outside once

more, where the frost sparkled and gleamed on the farmlands, John Davidson said slowly—

"We've been jolly lucky. I didn't realise the reindeer weren't supposed to come down here; but apart from that, we were in a pretty awkward position, foreigners, staying in the country on sufferance. They're not our reindeer, and we'd have no earthly right to go shooting settlers' dogs whatever they did. It was the greatest luck in the world that I was able to catch that dog without hurting it. If it had attacked me I should have had to shoot, and we'd have been in a mess. And then if he hadn't agreed to keep it tied up it would have been pretty unpleasant with Nils Torda trusting us to look after the reindeer. Well, come on; we've got to try and see our ski-track back again."

It was not until Nils Torda and about fifty more deer turned up two days later that the Davidsons realised the real importance of the dog episode.

"I thought afterwards I should have told you," said Nils gratefully, "that is a terrible thing that the Swedes' dogs do to the reindeer. It sometimes happens so in the winter near a settlement. The dog starts to chase the reindeer, and if he can catch up with one, he bites the hind-quarters and tears a bit of skin off and goes on until the reindeer is torn and bleeding round the tail and thighs. Then at last the reindeer makes a stand, but the dog bites its nose and ears, and at last it dies. But that is not the worst. Now the dog has learnt to behave like a wolf, and he will come again, and he doesn't take so long with the next deer. And the does that are not killed can miscarry or have something wrong at calving-time. And it is very hard on the Lapps; for the Swedes down here do not like us to come with the reindeer, and when we go to say what the dogs have been doing, they tell us that their dogs are always tied up. So what is one to do? If we shoot the dogs, perhaps the settler will kill our dogs. It was a very good thing for me that you were able to catch that dog and see the settler. Now perhaps it will be all right."

Nils laughed, too, when they told him that they had thought it was wolves. "You do not get the wolves down here, and then they attack the deer differently too. A wolf bites the reindeer in the lower part of the hind-leg and hangs on until the deer tires, and then he jumps up and seizes its throat. And he will always eat something—he tears apart the skin along the back and eats all the fat there."

When at last Pavve arrived with nearly another hundred more does and calves, it was really time for the Davidsons to go. For now the bulk of the original herd of three hundred or so was safe, and some more might well turn up in the spring or summer. But before they left they went a little farther down the river with Nils Torda to show their own boat *kåta* in the frozen harbour. It seemed strange to come back to her like this; already, in three weeks, the snow lay deep on her covering. They explained a sailing boat to Nils as well as they could, and perhaps both of them thought longingly of a snug cabin after the smoke and draughts of a Lapp *kåta*. But Nils certainly did not share their feelings; as far as he was concerned it was much more of a marvel to cross the ocean in anything so small than to bring the reindeer herds twice or three times as far in safety.

They went up to the forests again together; for now Pavve was left with the herd and Nils was going to join Sigga in a settler's spare cottage. As they journeyed, Mrs Davidson turned to John with a little laugh. "Do you remember saying, 'What we've got to do is to find out about the Lapps' life and what they do and why they do it and not be afraid of asking questions!' How much do we know about reindeer herding and flitting now?"

"Almost enough to go into business," said John grimly. "At any rate, Nils has asked me to join him for the spring flitting, and I've no doubt we could stay with him as long as we liked."

"Oh, do let's," said Mrs Davidson; "we could stay with them for the spring calving and some of the summer wandering in the mountains——"

John shook his head. "No, we must keep faith with the ship, and we've our own work to do. Besides, this land is dangerous . . . I really believe there was something in the old tales of Lapp spells and witchcraft."

For the second time the Davidsons crossed the Arctic Circle northward bound. But this time there was no indefinable menace about the land. The highway was only a superficial wound on the loneliness of the forest; there, up that beck, was a bear hide; there was the log cabin where the 'underground folk' played strange tricks on the hearth. They were in a silent, darkening land, shut in by timber, hushed by snow, lit only by reflection. But it was beautiful; not dead but breathless, enchanted.

The temperature was dropping again like a stone. The breath in their nostrils froze and crackled. Overhead the clouds were clearing and stars shone already in a pale sky. In the Far North the Lights flickered like a train.

"Now we shall have real cold again," said Nils contentedly, "and no snow."

"That will be good for the reindeer, won't it?" asked John eagerly, and wondered why Mrs Davidson laughed.

CURIOUS CLIMBING.

BY RONALD W. CLARK.

MOUNTAIN climbing is, in many ways, an understandable sport. During the mighty days of last century it had the excuse of exploration, of science, of topography. Today, it can be assessed as the most logical means of escape from a world that is becoming ever more mechanised.

The list of the sport's principal devotees is an honoured one, including, as it does, statesmen and eminent doctors, lawyers, artists, and soldiers. All have been proud to have their names linked with mountaineering, and, between them, they have produced a vast and varied literature. As well as being an understandable sport, it is, without a doubt, respectable.

Neither of these virtues can be attributed to its bastard son—curious climbing. For this sport has a record of ascents usually nocturnal and invariably forbidden. Its devotees rarely know one another, and their meetings savour much of the secret society. Their deeds are rarely immortalised on paper: they leave legends but few records.

Curious climbing—the only name that truly describes all the major and minor ramifications of the sport—is the ascent of any object raised above the level of the surrounding ground. That object may be a building, or an electricity pylon, a twelve-foot statue of some revered politician, or a hundred-foot clock tower.

The curious climber, even more than the legitimate mountaineer, must be a philosopher. He struggles and gains joy from his struggle. His straining arms raise their human burden, and he alone knows the effort needed. For the sport is even less competitive than rock climbing; it has no list of graded ascents. The greatest pleasures of the curious climber are abstract problems of difficulty, a negation of easy living that he chooses for himself. If he has one mental stimulant that is usually denied the mountain climber—lawlessness—he forfeits many a pleasure enjoyed by his more reputable brother. He has no magnificent views during his ascents, and discretion limits the account he can give of them afterwards. The blanket of the dark cloaks many of his most valiant deeds, and by far the greater number of them must remain, for ever, untold. He is, to be melodramatic, the lone wolf among climbers.

And he must admit, if he is honest, that there is no logical excuse, let alone reason, for his sport. Admit that only a kink in the brain-pan brings the delectable pleasure that comes from an evening spent on the shimmering, wet slates of some high building.

Yet the sport has a pedigree; not a long one, maybe; its earliest entries perhaps a bit unreliable, but a pedigree, nevertheless. For an ascent is recorded, in Elizabethan times, of the old Saint Paul's Cathedral; Lord Clive scaled a church tower in a fit of pique; while Byron made one of the first recorded climbs on Trinity Library, Cambridge. And, a few years ago, there was found near the top of King's Chapel, Cambridge, a coin dated 1760. It may have been the relic of an isolated crank, or of an enthusiastic band of eighteenth-century climbers. Only the stars know the answer.

Many more climbs can be traced by the student, one of the most notable being that of the Rev. James Jackson, one-time vicar of Rivington, an amazing old man who could walk sixty miles a day in his sixty-ninth year. His church weathercock became insecure, and steeplejacks shrank from the climb. Jackson rose to the occasion, and Rivington watched a frocked clergyman swarming up his own steeple and repairing the vane "under circumstances of terror which made the workmen recoil from the task, and gazing rustics turn green with horror at the sight."

Just as the early Alpine ascents of Smythe, Forbes, and Wills crystallised, in 1857, into the Alpine Club, so did these disconnected building climbs lead, in 1905, to the birth of the sport as we know it today.

In that year, at the height of the Golden Age of Welsh climbing, there was published, in Cambridge, 'The Roof-Climber's Guide to Trinity,' the world's first guide to building climbing. It was published as a May Week joke, applying to building climbing (then a fashionable recreation at Cambridge among a small and select number of legitimate climbers) the terms of rock-climbing that were then coming into general usage. It described, with apt quotations from the Classics, many delectable climbs on the roofs of the college; it was illustrated by useful, informative sketches; and it included a masterly ground-plan by a climber who later became a prominent lord. Among curious climbers it is now one of the holy works; among second-hand booksellers, a 'good buy.' A few months later came 'Wall and Roof Climbing' by the same author, giving "a short outline of the history and literature, ancient and modern, and an account of the laws, methods, appliances, and phraseology peculiar to the art." It was, in fact, the curious climbers' much-needed *apologia*.

Both of these books were privately printed and privately published. Yet the influence they exerted over the young men of those and of subsequent times was surprising. From the day of their publication, curious climbing became a sport with a background, with an ever-increasing number of followers; a strong, if scarcely visible, undercurrent that, for thirty-four years, has swept along beneath the tide of legitimate mountaineering.

Since those early days only two more books on the sport have been published: a guide to the roofs of Saint John's, and 'The Night Climbers of Cambridge,' a remarkably illustrated if slightly too-informative volume that appeared a few years ago. Stray articles have been written for the volumes of a few climbing-club journals; that is all. Most of the material that has appeared in print on the subject would be covered by 20,000 words.

Nevertheless, the sport still grows in popularity. During pre-war days the number of enthusiasts was small; today, dozens of devotees all over the country indulge in its subtle charms. Writers, soldiers, doctors, and at least one bishop, have taken it up, while it has even exercised its fascinations over sober administrators of the law. Many present-day enthusiasts are members of well-known climbing clubs; others have never felt good rock beneath their fingers. For the curious climber may, or equally well may not, be a mountaineer.

The attitude of the great climbing clubs to this love-child of their own creation is a curious one. Officially, they regard the sport as 'beyond the pale,' a descent to the greased-pole antics deplored by their arch-critic, Ruskin. The official heart will usually melt if the flame is applied with tact, however; the official brain usually remember a few buildings of its youth. But the official face must, even if only for legal reasons, turn a disapproving eye on the sport.

The question of legality, or lack of it, raises a query that rarely troubles the mountaineer. Only on the grouse moors of the Peak, or in the protected deer forests of the Northern Highlands, will he be told that he is no more than a common trespasser. And the attitude of the most irate keeper cannot be compared to that of a conscientious caretaker, aroused from sleep by a carelessly-kicked tile, or the feelings of an unsympathetic constable who interrupts the girdle traverse of some great statue. These people, without doubt, have no finer feelings.

The curious climber, as an expert once said, has yet to be accorded the licence given to the foxhunter; and, until that occurs, the collection of curious climbs will usually need as much discretion as climbing skill.

I was once told that curious climbs are divided into those that are difficult and those that are dangerous. When both virtues meet, the climb is transformed into a legend, an ascent to be collected only once or twice in a generation.

Of such fame are the bold faces of Westminster Cathedral, the direct ascent of Beachy Head, and the wireless masts of Rugby. The Cathedral has been attempted; Whymper and Mummery are both known to have carried out the chalk climb (often approached, like many of the granite cliff climbs of North Cornwall, by swimming), and the wireless masts have been illegally ascended at least twice. To add these last to your collection it is necessary to spit between the feet from the farthest and highest cross-bar—a delicate achievement, for which balance more than brawn is required.

For curious climbers, buildings are, of course, the real meat on the menu. For them, there are no architectural periods as most men know them. 'Elizabethan' to them means good brick, to be treated with respect if not well preserved, but invariably providing amusing half-hours. The Stuarts, it is realised, brought back to England the pillars of Classic times, provided awkward overhangs, and were not, generally speaking, very accommodating, even though recent work on the Fitzwilliam Museum and 'the Gibbs' at Cambridge has shown what can be done by a true-spirited enthusiast. Pseudo-Gothic with its delicate finger-holds, its ample ledges for the feet, its secure rough buttresses, offers everything the building-climber can desire. It has all the architectural blessings (from his point of view) of the real thing, but none of the untrustworthiness that may prove dangerous on a truly mediæval building.

Only the most modern erections are scorned by the climber, and "their stark and hygienic lines are as much an eyesore to the roof climber as they are to the University skyline. The crowning insult is the sudden and ominous appearance of incut drain-pipes lying snug and smug on their blank façades; these monstrosities are built into the wall and give no semblance of a hold, very different from the glorious uncertainty of the older ones which, if they were made of iron, might snap suddenly in two; or, if they were lead, come quietly apart, while the climber hanging on their tip would be lowered in a graceful parabola on to the tiles below. They had the invigorating quality that bad rock can have at times, but the new method is all too final." So speaks authority.

London, it is to be regretted, has been little explored or exploited by the curious climber, although a certain amount of work has recently been put in on the Law Courts. A few enthusiasts have added to their conquests a difficult building in Tottenham Court Road, where, as I was recently told, "it is a strenuous, as well as a delicate, job to pat on top of their bald heads the four old gentlemen who smile stonily down on the traffic below." The climb has quite a good reputation, as well as the cardinal virtue of sound stone, a contrast with Big Ben, which would have been ascended many years ago had its material not been notoriously rotten.

In spite of the Law Courts, St Clement Danes, and the Houses of Parliament, pipes are the most usual features of London climbing, and those to be found at the back of a very well-known medical school are typical of many. They appear to be easy, but night must cover their ascent. They vary in length, diameter, and difficulty, and a slip can mean an 80-feet drop to a glass roof. In addition, the movements of caretakers have to be studied.

It is Cambridge, the city where the sport was born, which has always held the lead both in the number and in the variety of its climbs. For the last forty years men have been scaling its walls, traversing its roofs, working out on its buildings as many routes to the square foot as can be found on the bold faces of Tryfaen or Lliwedd.

Stories of the delectable climbs to be found there are more numerous than mountaineers at Sligachan during April: many are humorous, some inspiring, none tragic. One of the most amusing concerns the Great Gate of Trinity. Half-way up its sixty feet of stone there stands a statue of Henry VIII., holding in his hand a gilded (or was it golden ?) baton. When renovators first put scaffolding over the face of the gate it was found that a chair-leg had been substituted for the baton. To later climbers the problem of the first ascent had always been a mystery, only recently solved by the finding of an old, annotated copy of 'Trinity Roofs.' In all probability only three people have ever known when, and at whose hands, the substitution took place.

One of the most inspiring episodes in the history of Cambridge climbing, an epic of patience and resource for all who follow on, was the conquest of the Chapel, Trinity, after the lightning-conductor had been removed. Without this, the climb was only considered possible with the equivalent of the mountaineers' 'mechanical aids.' False keys were obtained for the Chapel door (an attempt which ended in the loss of an 80-foot rope still used by the authorities). Tennis balls, with string attached, were thrown by specially recruited helpers in an attempt to 'belay' the rope over the *mauvais pas*. An archer was commissioned to fire his arrows (again with string attached) over the necessary promontory. All these essays failed (together with more subtle devices worthy of an Arsène Lupin in his wilder moments), and the Chapel was finally conquered once again by brilliant, unaided climbing.

Many ascents of it have been made, for it is the Valhalla of all Cambridge climbers. According to records, the first was by a pacifist during the war, to prove the existence of debatable courage. Many followed him, and in 1932 two umbrellas were placed on the pinnacles and shot down the following morning. The next night two Union Jacks appeared. The shot-gun expert refused to fire on the British flag, and it cost the Dean £20 in steeplejacks to get them down. It was after this episode that the lightning-conductor was removed. A few months after the first ascent of the pinnacles without this aid, however, two magnificent green-and-gold banners were fluttering from the top—the 'save Ethiopia' stunt.

Oxford is the second city in the land for the building-climber, and it can boast the almost legendary traverse from Balliol to Keble, a traverse immense both in its length and in its climbing difficulties. Tradition avers that Lawrence of Arabia was one of the few men ever to have made the climb in its entirety. At Oxford, also, a future Archbishop removed a nearly inaccessible statue, and left in its place a note to the Dean exhorting him to read Matthew vi. 20.

Other than the colleges of England, there are buildings of many different types on which the climber can spend interesting hours. Large among these loom castles, the stone and brick of which are often surprisingly firm. In North Wales and Ireland there are many dozens of them that were known as good climbing grounds during pre-war days. For purely practical reasons they have the popularity that must, assuredly, come to any building owned by such an impersonal body as a Government Department. The larger the organisation, the less the likelihood of any caretaker evincing interest in climbing activities. In this indifference of an impersonal body lies one of the main virtues of railway arches. Their bricks are frequently excellent, while few railway officials are sure of the attitude they can adopt with the ardent stegophilist.

In safety from the law, clock towers lie at the other end of the scale. They are many and varied, but most of them are very much exposed, legally, as well as from the climbing point of view. (A notable example, raising its 90 feet above the roofs of a South London suburb, offers one of the most delectable climbs of its type in the country.) City crosses occupy a somewhat similar position with regard to the law, but those at Cambridge and Winchester have been ascended on hundreds of occasions.

Among the more unusual objects for which the curious climber has an affection the common pylon (electric grid type) holds a prominent position. Most of the species can be scaled easily, and they have little variety; their very ease, however, combined with the sense of height and exposure that they give, lends to them an enchantment that is not easily matched. Care must always be taken, of course, to see that the cables pass on one side of the structure only. A few thousand volts are as fatal to the climber as to any saner man.

The Eiffel Tower could, no doubt, be climbed externally, but vigilant gendarmes stopped the only attempt that has ever been made on its slender tracery. The same fate overtook an attempt on Cleopatra's Needle, made by the late O. G. Jones during the early years of this century.

Tree climbing can hardly be included in the sport, for many devotees look down on even the elm with uncensored scorn. It is an unexplainable attitude, nevertheless, for in 'Wall and Roof Climbing' whole chapters were devoted both to this branch of the sport and to the subtleties of haystack climbing, a variation on the more sober forms of curious climbing that can, at times, prove its utility.

Neither buildings, pylons, trees, nor haystacks are really essential to the sport, however. Even furniture appeals to the really catholic climber. During the '90's of last century the billiard-table at Wastdale Head, the climbing centre of the English Lake District, was internationally famous. It was necessary to lie on top of the table, move to the underside, and traverse its whole length without touching the floor, returning to the top by the opposite end. Another more difficult, if less complex, climb at Wastdale was the traverse of the billiard-room's picture-rail, a delicate piece of climbing that was begun by a difficult move from the mantelshelf. Together with the 'barn-door traverse' it helped to banish the *ennui* of many off-days.

But all the curious climbs at Wastdale had the blessing, or curse, of legality; for that, the connoisseur could hardly forgive them.

Even though, in the words of the Classics, "bump supper nights frequently provide the pinnacles of many colleges with a rash of caps, gowns, and domestic articles," it is rarely the object of the curious climber to reveal his visit. By the very nature of the sport, few of its great exponents are recognised as such during their lifetime.

Nevertheless, a few of the 'stars' are known, their names encircled by a golden aura of legend. Greatest of them all is the still living author of the sport's first two text-books. By his achievements on the hills, by his mountain poetry, and by his record of curious climbs, he towers above the men who both were, and are, his contemporaries as the Himalayas tower above the foothills of India. He, almost alone among the giants of pre-war climbing days, is still alive, a very great and respected figure.

It was one of his friends who, taking a post in Dublin, astounded the local constabulary and outwitted them by his deeds on more than one notable Irish building.

Rand Herron, the magnificent American climber, was another who appreciated the sport in its lighter and finer variations. He fell to his death a few years ago through a slip on the Great Pyramid.

A fourth expert in the sport was Harry Gibson, killed in the war, of whom it was said in the 'Alpine Journal' that "he climbed whenever his work and his restricted means allowed, and he climbed anything with pleasure. Boulders, sea-rocks, quarries, buildings sacred and profane, all contributed to satisfying his appetite."

But greatest of all in the quantity of his curious climbs was, perhaps, O. G. Jones, ace rock-climber of last century. He began young, climbing the façade of the Albert Hall on its opening by Queen Victoria. He climbed dozens, if not hundreds, of less notable buildings; statues he numbered in equal quantity. Chair and table traverses of peculiar delicacy were known to delight him, and he once climbed round a railway engine, using only rivet-heads as finger and foot-holds.

Such men exist today, carrying on the tradition of the queerest, if most captivating, of all sports. They are not mere gymnasts, for they gain an intellectual as well as a physical joy from their efforts. We can hardly criticise them, for we all, in the words of the immemorial Sterne, "ride our own hobby-horses." Putting on rubbers and old flannels, they go their solitary ways, steal a few hours from the night, and leave a legend behind them.

Why, why, why? Non-climbers may theorise, but no climber can tell you.

MAGA'S LOG.

Hic et ubique.

I. NAVIGATIONAL WARNING.

BY IAN SCOTT.

I WAS taking my ship to sea from Portsmouth Harbour the other day and had first to go up Fareham Creek to fuel. I recognised one of the crew of the fuelling lighter, and in spite of his changed rig I knew he had been my cox'n in *L 21*. He waved to me and shouted, "Come up here, sir." I clambered aboard. "Just look at that, sir!" he said, pointing. "Doesn't it fair break your heart?"

Moored head and stern in Dead Man's Row, awaiting removal to the breaker's yard, was a well-remembered hull. With a pang I saw it was *L 21*. Shabby and uncared for, she was a pathetic sight. I could not but remember in contrast her once smart appearance and busy life. It is the cruel tragedy of rearmament that useful ships must die before their time. The vessel I was in was much the older of the two. It seemed a pity to see the gallant old boat lying there so rusty and ashamed.

It was only a few days later that I arrived on the Ayrshire coast for a week's leave. It was a blustering night. A strong westerly gale was blowing and heavy rain and sleet drummed against the rattling windows. I had just come into the sanctuary of the house and was sitting in front of a brave fire with a welcome glass in my hand when the voice of the B.B.C. announcer broke into the peace of the room.

"Navigational Warning. A submarine in tow of a small tug on her way to the breaker's yard has parted her tow off Corsewell Point in Wigtown and is drifting at about three knots in the direction of Arran. She has no crew on board, but has lights burning. All ships are advised to keep a look-out for this danger to navigation."

"Poor old boat," I said. "I wonder who she is. It's strange that these small craft are always towed to the breakers' yards in the worst possible weather. Only last month the *Medea* was lost off Cornwall. Our coasts are strewn with similar wrecks. However, it's a better fate to be wrecked than converted into razor blades. Good luck to her!"

Later in the evening I heard more details. The submarine was *L 21*! She was outside there in the gale and sleet. Once again I seemed to be back on the bridge of my old craft; but now there would be no comforting engine vibrations underfoot. She must be wallowing in the heavy seas like a half-tide rock, her vacant bridge washing over as she drifted at the mercy of the wind.

Restless, I walked out into the night and made my way down to the shore. Standing clear of the breaking surf I gazed across the angry Firth towards the loom of Arran. As I peered into the darkness I could picture her clearly. The rain and sleet beat upon me unheeded. Faintly I caught the scent of bog-myrtle as it was borne over the black tumbling waters. I thought of *L 21* fighting her last fight alone. At last, wet through, I turned sadly away. For me there was to be no sleep that night. If I closed my eyes memory came surging back. *L 21* had a special place in my mind, for she had been my last submarine command, and in her I had had an experience in these waters that I would never forget. I relived the past. . . .

In a curtain of steady rain we had entered Lamlash at the close of day. Once inside Holy Island we were out of the swell that rolled up the Firth, and sheltered from the full strength of the wind, but icy blasts of rain struck us intermittently as sudden gusts swooped down from the high encircling hills. With them they brought the welcome scent of damp heather and bog-myrtle.

With great thankfulness we let go our anchors and snugged down for the night. There were only two of us: H.M. Submarines *L 21* and *L 16.*

We were on one of these apparently senseless cruises, with no object, which entail the circumnavigation of the British Isles. I had made many before and was to make many again. The West Coast of Scotland is, to anybody who knows it, the perfect cruising ground in good weather. But in bad weather I have yet to discover a worse place for navigation in the whole world. For a fortnight we had been living in our boats without the amenities of a depot ship, and we had weeks more of it to look forward to. Without exception, all hands were completely fed up.

Dawn displayed a pale, watery sky streaked with orange and yellow. The steep hillsides were shrouded in fine mist. Round us the grey sea became tinged with brown from the torrential burn water pouring noisily off the dripping moors. It was a depressing scene.

A signal came from the Captain of *L 16* reporting a suspected case of scarlet fever on board. Later, the local sawbones confirmed the diagnosis. For a period we were filled with hope. Perhaps the cruise would be called off; perhaps we should return to Portsmouth. No matter how bad the weather was, a return trip would be welcomed by everybody. Rumour was rife.

In the meantime we collected our mail and fresh provisions, which had arrived in the Ardrossan steamer from the mainland hours late.

Mac came over to see me about his patient and to discuss the situation.

"It's a good idea, Mac, and I hope it will work," I told him. "I'm fed up with this cruise. It's bad enough in good weather, Lord knows."

"Yes," said Mac. "It's a pity the staff didn't have to make the trip instead of us. They might learn something. In spite of the Doc. I'm sure that blighter hasn't got scarlet fever; still, I don't propose to look a gift-horse in the mouth!"

"Pompey, Lamlash, Thurso, Dundee, and Pompey," I recited, "a long way apart, and nothing to be gained from the trip. With any luck we may be recalled, but I don't see how *L 21* is affected or infected. I've got a hunch we'll have to go on alone."

"Surely not," said Mac; but he added thoughtfully, "I'm not so sure at that."

Eventually a signal came from Admiral S. It was as I had feared. *L 16* was to return to Portsmouth and the unfortunate *L 21* was to carry on with the cruise as ordered. I could think of nothing more damnable than to continue this trip alone. I would not even have Mac's moral support at our far-flung ports of call. This was brought home to me emphatically as *L 16* left harbour for home. We watched her enviously. Mac had discovered a piper among his crew, and as the submarine drew away, the piper sturdily paced the narrow upper deck in the driving rain. I realised suddenly that the plaintive air coming faintly over the increasing stretch of sea was scarcely the tune for such an occasion. It was the "Flowers of the Forest," and Mac and I had both had a common ancestor killed on Flodden Field. It was fey.

As *L 16* disappeared into the mist I felt very much alone. Why the devil had not I painted a willing victim with red lead spots and also claimed a 'suspect'? It was too late now.

The pilot and I studied the charts glumly. We had the choice of two routes. We could go inside through the Sounds of Islay and Mull or right outside the Inner Hebrides. With the complete lack of visibility I did not like these two narrow passages. There had been a westerly gale warning (it was already blowing hard), and I hoped the mist and rain would blow clear to the westward. My next port of call was Thurso, and I knew that no matter which I chose, it would be poisonous. The wicked uncertainty of the tides and strong currents round the islands would be amplified by the weather. The lights in this thick mist would be no more certain.

I decided in favour of the extra sea room in the outer passage.

"We're in for the hell of a trip, Pilot," I said to my R.N.R. lieutenant. "The anchorages suitable for us are few and far between. We *would* buy a westerly gale for this stretch!"

"I wish I were safely back on the North Atlantic run, sir," he replied. "There we might be on railway lines for all the weather affects us. There's far too much land about this run to please me."

"You're right!" I cried. "I only wish we could squeeze through the Forth and Clyde Canal."

With everything movable in the boat secured for heavy weather we were soon under way. Once clear of Holy Island there remained no shadow of doubt that we were for it.

The Arran hills faded almost at once in the low-lying mist. Only the white line of surf marked the coast-line. Past Pladda I laid my course for Sanda. Ailsa Craig might have been in another world for all the chance I had of sighting it. Off the Cantyre hills the wind came in increasing gusts. Round us we could see only a few hundred yards of smoking grey sea. The ice-cold wind cut steadily into us from the starboard beam. Everything dripped with moisture. The chart, already lying saturated and pulpy on the chart-table, was doing its best to break from its moorings in the eddying wind blasts.

"And this," I said to myself, "is a dead lee. God help us after the Mull!"

Through the swirling mists came the dark and desolate heights of the Mull of Cantyre and the barren isle of Sanda. Many years had passed since as a very small boy I had rounded this cape—a small boy in a steamer long since foundered on this very run. These tall, sinister black rocks are perpetually lashed by the breaking seas except in the calmest of weather. Six turbulent currents meet off this point, and now the resultant cross seas, a tumbling mass of grey-green with the foaming crests flat-blown by the gale, made the spot a very maelstrom. Usually I would pass between Sanda and the Mull, but these contorted leaping seas drove me well to the south'ard to give it a wide berth.

As we came round on to our course the motion of the boat grew terrific. Breaking through the tops of the gigantic waves, she would be naked and dry for a third of her length, to come crashing down on the next wave. Sheets of heavy spray were blown straight into our faces. The foreplanes would be broken off soon! The shuddering exhaust, strangled intermittently by the heavy sea, was beginning to get on my nerves. The boat rolled and hung, pitched and bucked like the death struggles of a giant orc attacked by killer whales.

Every man on board was holding grimly to the nearest support. The low-roofed mist closed down on us again till the visibility was less than a hundred yards. Any thoughts I might have had of using the Sound of Islay left me. I laid my course to pass to the south'ard of Islay. We were meeting now the full force of the wind and sea coming in from the Atlantic, but the boat was riding the long rollers happily; their very length was the saving of us. The violent motion of the turn had eased except for the occasionally racing propellers. From time to time they would thunder loudly as the tail of the boat rose clear of the surface. Continuous rain and flying scud lashed us on the bridge, and at length the heavy thudding blows of the seas on the casing forced me to ease down. It was not the sea that worried me. I had been through a typhoon in a very cranky *L* boat, and knew there was nothing in that line to be afraid of. It was this rotten visibility that was the trouble; it made me depend entirely on dead reckoning. In such a sea we were bound to get abnormal drift and currents, and if by any evil chance we were forced on to the rocky coast there would be little chance of surviving.

The boat rose gamely to the scend of the huge seas, to drop suddenly like a falling lift. The motion was taking its toll on officers and men. The navigator scanned the sodden chart for possible shelter.

"What's happened to No. 1, Pilot?" I asked.

"Flaked out, sir," he replied, grinning all over his salt-encrusted face. "Plenty too much motion!"

No. 1 was well known in ocean yacht racing, and I had thought he would be the last to crack. But when one adds the appalling atmosphere of a submarine to her peculiar motion, one gets a combination that will upset the hardiest. In a few more hours I knew the atmosphere in the wardroom would be one you could almost lean against. It is always the more noticeable after coming out of the fresh air.

Visibility opened up momentarily over the long grey seas. The wind grew fiercer and the sea itself was hidden by the low-flying spindrift. Away off to starboard I glimpsed the black loom of the Mull of Oa. High as it was, it was almost obscured by the breaking surf. I remembered how it had terrified me when passing beneath it in my childhood. I did not like it very much better now. Almost I was tempted to run into Loch Indaal for shelter, poor as it was there.

Instead I altered course up for Barra Head in the island of Berneray, at the extreme southern end of the Outer Hebrides. It had a thirty-three mile light, and I counted on picking this up after dark. I laid a course to pass to the west'ard of Skerryvore, and allowed enough for the drift to keep me well clear of the dreaded Dubh Artach and the isle of Tiree. After what seemed interminable hours of battering seas I took a line of soundings.

I thought from the gradually shallowing readings that I was approaching the Skerryvore bank. In view of the head-sea it was perhaps a shade soon to expect it, but I prided myself on my dead reckoning.

Already my muscles were aching with the continuous strain of holding on, and my eyes were puffed and half closed from the constant lashing of gale-driven spume.

"Not such a bad shot, Pilot," I said complacently. "We've been set a bit to the eastward."

To starboard I suddenly sighted through a rift in the thick mist a pale white finger standing upright in a tangle of breaking seas. I looked more closely. God! it was Dubh Artach! We had been set miles to the east'ard, and were travelling much more slowly over the ground than I had thought. Of a sudden I felt very tired. Another half-mile to the east and we would have struck.

"Pilot," I bellowed through the uproar, "no likee! Could you get me a job in the Cunard White Star?"

"My sacred oath, sir," he replied hoarsely, "we allowed enough set to hit the States! I like this less and less."

"Cheer up," I said. "In submarines navigation is 'Hit or miss.' It's an even chance, and that's not so bad!"

With the fall of darkness visibility grew less. In spite of the strengthening gale it had dropped to from fifty to one hundred yards.

L 21, like all her class, was a fine sea boat, but she was taking a terrible hammering. Rest below was impossible, though I must admit that the comfort of the crew played little part in my thoughts. All I fervently prayed for was increased visibility—for a landmark or a star. My aerial had long since gone, so I could no longer count on directional wireless to help. As we approached the radius of Barra Head's light it was borne upon me with growing certainty that I would not see that welcome gleam. The light was nearly six hundred feet up and would be well above the low-lying mist. If it would only blow clear! Lord knows it was blowing hard enough!

Gradually there was an almost imperceptible easing of the seas. This could only mean one thing. We were beginning to get a lee. Soundings confirmed this. It was almost the last straw that the sounding machine should choose that moment to break down. Besides being blind we had now lost the sense of touch, but I could still smell. Amid the smashing blows of the wind I caught the definite scent of wet bracken. Almost simultaneously the Pilot shouted, "Look sir!" He was pointing over the side at the saddle-tanks. Below the plunging bridge I saw masses of kelp freshly torn away by the gale. We were close to an unseen shore.

Oh! for a glimpse of a

landmark. I knew that close to me was the stamping ground of the M'Neils of Barra. In the sheltered Castle Bay I could have found haven. The elements were turning me from the door. I dare not hold on.

Unwillingly I altered course up the Minch, uncertain of my position. I felt I would give ten years of my life for a glimpse of a light, knowing that we were surrounded on every hand by hungry rocks. I decided to haul well off to starboard in the hope of picking up some recognisable piece of Skye at dawn.

'By guess or by God'—submarine navigation has been so described. I sincerely hoped God would not lose sight of us. My third hand came up on the bridge to give the navigator a spell. He was a tough young sub-lieutenant; the conditions did not seem to worry him much. He brought me up a welcome flask of hot soup and started a bright conversation.

"Do you think, sir, we'll hit off the Police Games at Dundee?" he inquired. "I've always wanted to see a caber tossed."

I felt like telling him he would be damn lucky to see Dundee, far less a caber.

He prattled on. "Will we have time for any fishing at Thurso?"

He was just what I wanted on the bridge at the moment. Anyone who could think of fishing or Highland Games in a sea like this was a freak of nature.

I was getting very tired now. I had been continuously on the bridge since leaving Lamlash, and I was cold and wet through. The blood had drained from my fingers and feet. Try as I would I could not carry on a conversation. I was rapidly reaching a state of physical and mental exhaustion. The continuous shrieking of the wind and roar of breaking seas, together with the violent motion, were wearing me down. My eyes were so painful I could hardly hold them open. I kept two look-outs up with me through this never-ending night, relieving them in short spells.

It grew lighter, but with deep disappointment I saw that the thick mist was still with us. The wind was strength 10 on the Beaufort Scale (at Stornoway they logged it at 12). With full daylight the visibility was about two hundred yards. I must surely get a glimpse of Skye soon. I had eased right down and doubled the look-outs.

I was forced to go below for a few minutes at this critical time, and left the R.N.R. lieutenant on the bridge. He was well aware of the situation.

"Keep your eyes skinned," I begged him earnestly.

I had just pulled off my dripping oilskins when the engine stopped. I dashed for the conning-tower ladder. As I reached the bridge and glanced over the side I saw a scene of nightmare horror that will remain with me while I live.

Abaft the port beam was a

group of jagged rocks over which the surf was pouring and swirling. Ahead of us a wall of cliff towered a hundred feet up into the curtain of mist. Surf was breaking against this rampart and spray flying high.

We were embayed! Could I turn the boat off this cliff against the tremendous seas? The rocks were inside my turning circle. I went full ahead with the helm hard over, going slow astern on my inner screw. She hung, and slowly, very slowly, began to turn. We knew our half-inch hull would not last a minute if we were driven ashore. A quick glance round showed me two tall pillar rocks standing out of the boiling surf to starboard and getting fainter as we clawed off the shore. Boyhood memory stood me in good stead, for I recognised the pillar rocks instantly. They were MacLeod's Maidens!

At long last I knew exactly where I was. Gradually *L 21* fought her way round till she was head to sea. Never have I experienced such a warm surge of relief in all my life. The dragging seconds had been an eternity.

I had hardly dared look at that terrifying cliff face. As we struggled to turn for open water the wind and sea had carried us in till it seemed that only the tremendous backwash held us off the grim black rocks. The noise was stupendous and the motion indescribable. The screaming wind echoed and re-echoed, and the surf boomed and crashed like the broadsides of a battleship. What made it seem even more terrifying was the remarkable absence of sea-birds. The desolation of the scene was complete. I was glad we could not see the full height of the cliff face, which at this point is four hundred feet.

In fixing my position then I discovered both my compasses were defective. It was not surprising after the long hours of violent motion.

I, too, had had enough, and the crew were exhausted. Still on the motors we turned to creep into the shelter of Loch Bracadale. As we completed the turn the huge piling seas hurled the boat along like a surf-board. All eyes were strained for further landmarks. The visibility had again dropped to a bare hundred yards when out of the murk to starboard I saw a column of brown peat-stained water falling out of the sky. The savage wind tore it away in steam-like spray, giving it the appearance of boiling water. I could see no cliff face behind it, but on the chart this eerie waterfall was clearly marked. I was almost in now. Cliff and rocks appeared through the driving mist and rain. I rounded into the comparatively quiet waters of Loch Harport. Here with her bows trimmed down and both cables out to a clench, the tired boat rested.

In the morning I returned to the beach and looked out over the still restless waters of the Firth of Clyde. Opposite me lay Arran, her peaks hidden by the low-lying cloud, but with her hillsides mantled in snow. Thin shafts of golden sunshine here and there broke through the clouds, dappling land and sea alike. Brilliant white spots appeared on the snow-covered hills, and on Holy Island the sun's rays lit for a brief moment a patch of russet-brown.

During the night *L 21* had come to rest, grounding in the sandy shallows of Corriecravie.

As I gazed across to Arran a pale rainbow showed irresolutely in the sky. Perhaps *L 21* had found the rainbow's end.

II. ALL CLEAR AFT!

BY SEA-WRACK.

It is curious how certain things stick in one's memory. Collisions—or narrow escapes from collisions—at sea, seem to be among the events that come into that category.

Thus, I remember vividly a certain night in the Mediterranean many years ago: a pitch-black night, when the proverbial hand literally could not be seen in front of one's face. We were on passage to Malta from Gib., and I had the middle watch. At six bells I was walking up and down the narrow constricted navigating bridge, yawning; for not only was it exceedingly dark, but it was also hot and steamy, and I kept moving to counteract the sleepiness induced by the endless, monotonous rattles and squeaks which our old sloop always set up when at sea. It was just as I paused and stared out over the bridge-rails into the darkness ahead that I was suddenly convinced that I had heard something: some foreign or strange noise that intruded on all the well-known and recognisable creakings and groans of the sloop. I was not sure what it was—the faint beat of engines, or the wash of a bow-wave—but that something did lie out there in the darkness ahead over and beyond the throbbing forecastle, I became more and more sure as the seconds sped. And yet the peculiar thing was—and other watch-keepers of those days, when we carried no lights at sea, may perhaps, on reflection, bear me out—that the impression was at once sharp and yet vague, almost as if it were an intuition, or the unconscious exercise of some heightened sense of perception, as when the experienced gillie lifts a sudden and inquiring eye at a distant crag at which his novice companion stares uncomprehendingly without being aware of the stag.

It was not eyesight, for I could see nothing; that is to say, nothing except the dim upright loom of the foremast and the scarcely perceptible break of the forecastle. The actual bows faded out into the impalpable blackness of the night ahead.

Troubled and anxious I recollect I was, as I stood there for what seemed an age yet could only have been a few seconds, straining my eyes through night-glasses, hoping that I was mistaken and yet feeling inwardly convinced I was not. And then, as if moved by some uncontrollable impulse, my hand went swiftly to a button and I switched on our dimmed side-lights. . . .

At once my heart seemed to jump into my throat; for high above the fo'c'sle, and almost right ahead, there shot into startling view a pair of bright side-lights with over the length of a cricket-pitch between them. So swift was her answer, so quick was the big ship—dead in our track—to reply, that the thought flashed through my mind that her officer of the watch had seen us, or suspected our presence, almost simultaneously with our own action. The tense seconds preceding our mutual recognition that, out of all the thousands of square miles of sea in that part of the Mediterranean, we were precariously trying to occupy the same small patch, only added to the swiftness of what followed. Simultaneously again we both slammed our helms hard-a-port, and I heard distinctly the clang of the big ship's engine-room telegraphs as she went astern on her starboard engine. A collision, or near collision, especially at night, seems to be haunted always by the hoarse cries of the human voice, and the staccato drumming of feet on hollow-sounding decks. In both ships they were in evidence now, as the watch on deck stood by with fenders, anxiously lining the rail. A dim flash of a white scarf or the fainter grey of an upturned face alone denoted their presence. I had been warned by the height of the glowing red side-light of what to expect, but I confess to a shock when that towering black steel-shod forecastle loomed over our port bow. It seemed gigantic, like a moving mountain, and its significance seemed heightened by the dully roaring white bow-wave that rolled back from the box-like stem; for there was little of the 'cut-water' effect there—rather did the vast, square, dark shape appear to be shoving a piled-up white torrent of water stubbornly ahead. A long way beyond I could just discern horizontal white terraces where her bridges rose indistinct into the dark sky.

A split second later, the threatening black bows, on a level with our foremast steaming light, were abreast our bridge—so near it almost seemed one could lean over and touch the moist gleaming plates. Then with a crash her bow-wave struck along our port side, and the sloop rolled away over to starboard with a protesting groaning and working of steel and timber. The rattle of the foremast, shrouds, and rigging rose to a crescendo.

There appears to be an instant in a collision—as in other human affairs—a crucial point where the anxious participator can either dolefully groan, " Well, that's torn it! " or equally certainly sigh with thankfulness, " Thank heaven she'll clear now! "

As we rolled heavily away from that vast expanse of oozing plates, I remember wiping my forehead and heaving a sigh of relief; for I could now discern the length and inclination of the other vessel, and I knew we had safely slipped by, though even as our stern was passing along her hull, abreast the bridge, I was hurriedly correcting its tendency to leave a farewell dent in the stranger about the level of the first funnel. Without any regrets I watched her bulky mass fade into the night. She was sixteen thousand tons and her speed I estimated at fifteen knots.

Things happen suddenly at sea. Five minutes later the incident was wellnigh forgotten.

Not so with a sister sloop of ours which round that time encountered a big tramp not far from Gib., one equally dark night. They met almost bows on, and the tramp sank in under five minutes. There were no casualties, however, and I remember the grin on the face of my opposite number when he described the affair. " Almost before we knew there had been a collision," he said, " we found the mate of the tramp down in the wardroom drinking a whiskey-and-soda with equanimity and placid relish. It was the fourth time it had happened to him that year, and he was obviously an expert at abandoning sinking ships with celerity and no fuss."

Then there was the case of the destroyer captain who hit the breakwater of a harbour at fifteen knots in a fog, and at the subsequent court-martial proved with masterly precision that according to the current chart of the locality he missed it by fifty yards, and that the mole could not possibly have been there.

On another occasion in snotty days I remember one of our senior midshipmen cutting a dash in the duty picket-boat. He had been in charge of the boat for six months without a single mishap, and was one of the finest natural exponents of the art of picket-boat handling I have ever seen. As junior snotties we used to watch him with awe bring his command alongside a crowded jetty, and envy our slightly superior term-mate who was detailed as his assistant. Then came his last day in his beloved boat. We were at Lamlash in pre-war days. The picket-boat came faultlessly alongside 'without cracking an egg.' The senior snotty received his orders from the officer of the watch, ran smartly down the port accommodation ladder, and in a moment was off, his boat circling gracefully and powerfully on her way to the distant pier. In those days (and perhaps now ?) the pier at Lamlash had a kind of T-piece at the end. Our senior snotty, and mentor, on arrival, slammed round one of the ends of the T-piece at his usual full speed, threading his way, nevertheless, with his customary skill through the crowd of boats moving in the vicinity. Then when he was coming in bows first along the inner part of the T, sudden and unexpected disaster befell him. And it came about in this fashion. Not content with the usual signals that snotties of picket-boats transmitted to the enclosed engine-rooms by means of a bell-lanyard close to the wheel, and striving ever for perfection and a fuller means of welding boat and crew into one perfect whole, he had devised an additional short system of signals between himself at the wheel and the artificer in the engine-room. Alas ! there was, unknown to him, a relief rating on duty below to whom the special code of bell signals was so much double-Dutch. Moreover, equally zealous in his own line, the new-comer was actually down below when the bell rang and not—as was often the case until the destination was nearly reached—festooned gracefully in the engine-room hatchway. Consequently, when the single ring went for 'Stop engines ! ' all was well, but at the same moment he caught sight of a soiled card of instructions hanging in the dim light near a bulkhead—the snotty's private code. At that moment the bell rang again for one of the snotty's pet signals, 'Give her a kick ahead ! '

The E.R.A., muddled by trying to read all the signals on the card at once, chose the wrong meaning, and went 'Full speed ahead ' instead.

On deck the senior snotty, his alert eye on the near-by steps on his starboard hand, clutched the arm of the sturdy cox'n as he nearly fell over backwards. For the picket-boat all of a sudden surged ahead, her propeller churning the water until it boiled under her counter. Open-mouthed with surprise, the senior snotty, recovering himself quickly, saw to his horror his boat bounding forward towards the grim, solid-looking piles of the main pier which seemed to be approaching at an alarming speed. He just had time to roar "Down—flat on the deck ! " to the astonished bowmen for'ard ; to grab the helm and straighten up the boat ; then to ring down three on the engine-room bell—which indicated 'Full astern '—when the picket-boat dived under the pier between two rows of piles. Down below the new hand in the engine-room obediently went 'Full astern,' but it was too late. The bowmen of the picket - boat had disappeared from view, flat on their faces, while two feet above them the underpart of the jetty was rapidly engulfing the pride of the snotty's heart. There came a tremendous crash and a succession of rendings as the funnel—the stays having parted — was sheered off at its base. On either side of the wheel lay the snotty and his cox'n, both prone on the deck. As the former felt the rapid rush of the pier overhead and was engulfed in the cloud of black smoke pouring out of the dismembered funnel-uptake, his face became purple with wrath and discomfiture.

The picket-boat's way, indeed, carried her right through and out the other side, where she reappeared as a startling transformation, being now nothing but a sorry wreck, minus her funnel and other deck fixtures, and quite black. As she drew clear, the senior snotty and his crew rose sheepishly from the deck and stared from bloodshot eyes set in sooty faces at the scandalised but interested features of the onlookers lining the jetty rails above.

So, harshly, does Fate sometimes deal lightning blows at her favourites. It is only fair to add, however, that the senior snotty was, when I last met him, a post-captain. I wonder if he remembers that day.

But of all the narrow squeaks in the way of collisions at sea there is one especially that stands out in my memory. Again it was a night of pitch-black darkness, and there was added the cold of the Far North ; an icy bite to the edge of the rising gale that seemed to speak of the near-by Arctic Circle. It came after freezing days and nights at sea ; for at that time the Fleet was ever rolling and plunging, line on line, like a restless, persistent thunderbolt, across the leagues of grey water that lie between the Orkneys and the coast of Norway.

We had been farther north than usual. It was mid-winter, and, on the lower bridge of the battleship of which I write, balaclava helmets, double-woollen mittens, and heavy coats seemed ineffective to keep out the cold. Over the bridge-rails, two and a half cables ahead, a faint blue light indicated the presence of our next ahead. Sometimes, as her stern dipped, the small light disappeared abruptly, and its bobbing, jerky motion denoted the big ship's uneasy passage in the rising sea. The wind, as we steamed to the east'ard, was broad on the port bow. I mention its direction because I think it formed a fortuitous circumstance that helped materially to save us from serious damage — if not total disaster. A deep silence engulfed the lower bridge, except for an occasional rattle from the wheelhouse amidships as the quartermaster twirled the spokes of the wheel. We seemed to have struck one of those patches where the ship kept steady station on her next ahead without any prompting from the officer of the watch in the way of increases or decreases of revolutions.

Into this comparatively peaceful scene, overriding the whistle and hum of the uneasy wind and making the pulses throb with sudden excitement, there fell those urgent human voices mentioned earlier as seeming to be inseparable from any scene where collision is imminent. The rapid clatter and drumming of feet followed. And from the upper navigating bridge came a sudden flurry of movement and a string of orders down the voice-pipe. I can capture still the intense feeling of well-ordered confusion that then fell upon the bridge. A messenger clattered down a ladder: the quartermaster's deep bass voice echoed orders like a human megaphone, the wheel spinning in his hands, his eyes glued to the compass-card, his feet widely straddled. Simultaneously, the engine-room telegraphs clanged madly and the ship heeled. And then it was that we, who were on the starboard side of the bridge, felt suddenly a shower of grit and coal-dust falling round, and looking across the bridge beheld at last, with a sudden sense of shock and impending disaster, the cause of all the confusion of the past few seconds. Just over the rails of the port wing of the lower bridge hung an enormous pair of side-lights, and far below them a whitened, snoring bow-wave rose almost alongside our port side. A big ship, tearing through the night, was making straight for our vitals, amidships, bows on. The urgent clang of her telegraphs came down-wind to us, and lights flickered and flashed along her bridges and dipped and bobbed along her fo'c'sle as men ran here and there with lamps.

It looked as if nothing on earth—or at sea—could save us, but even as we stared horror-stricken her green light disappeared abruptly, and down-wind with a hoarse urgency there came the deafening bellow of her deep-toned siren vibrating in our ears.

Our Captain was on the upper bridge now. His terse, sharp orders—delivered in cool, collected tones, though a few seconds before he had been fast asleep—came to our ears down the quartermaster's voice-pipe. The deck under our feet was quivering and shaking, and the ship was listing to the drive of the engines going full speed ahead under full starboard helm.

Anxiously, we watched the stranger, our eyes glued to her port side-light; the now discernible and sickeningly close bulk looming out of the night was only too apparent. We had lost our next ahead, but dimly through the smoke we could see the grey shape of the battleship astern of us, her morse-light anxiously twinkling from the bridge.

It was touch and go, but we were swinging fast. Gradually the huge red light drew away. . . .

"Damned fine bit of emergency manœuvring,” a voice whispered in my ear, and I turned with a start.

It was my opposite number who had come over from the port side with a rather superior air to tell me all about it.

I watched the red light moving aft. “ Why, how d’you mean ? ” I asked, and added, “ Jove ! she is a whopper ! What ship is she, d’you know ? ”

“ No,” he said, “ but we soon will. It was her smoke first gave us an idea she was coming : bits of grit coming down-wind, d’you see ? One of the look-outs reported it—out on the port wing—and the whiff and fumes, they came first. Yes, the port look-out actually *smelt* her coming : we were dead to leeward, you see. Then Tanky got busy on the bridge. I’m glad he was on watch : he’s passed for first-class ships, you know. He took in the position at once : only thing to do was to go full ahead and swing the stern away by putting the helm hard over.

“ Yes,” I murmured ; “ I realised that.”

The danger was almost past. I walked over with my term-mate to the port wing of the bridge. The big ship was crossing astern of us. Already her bows were out of sight beyond our after superstructure. It gave us a shock to watch her, for she looked as if she were passing slap through the middle of our low poop. She was all lights now, and we could see she was a big liner.

“ Gosh ! ” my friend whispered, grabbing my arm ; “ she’s the *A*——. You know, the big twenty-thousand-ton liner, and she’s got those specially strengthened bows for dealing with ice on the North Atlantic run. My foot ! if she’d really caught us I believe—armour and all — she’d have gone slap through us ! Must have been doing eighteen knots, too. She certainly was well handled. I take off my hat to her ‘ owner ’ — that’s seamanship when *both* ships do the right thing—in fact, the only thing—simultaneously.”

I nodded in agreement, and looked aft again. The liner seemed very close. She put her helm over so that her stern should swing clear of us aft. Her bridge went slowly past our low poop—towering high above it. Then her high terraced promenade decks. She looked very big, very impressive, with two large black funnels raking the night sky. There was only a quarter of her to go now. The sudden dip from the boat-deck down to the deep cavern of the after well-deck slid past our poop. She was going ahead. And then as a final gesture : a kind of salute to good seamanship, emphasising with a deep significance the narrowness—the hand’s breadth—of interval between safety and complete disaster at sea, we saw a lamp high up on her poop deck being waved by an officer stationed there, and from his unseen figure there came suddenly, as the last of his ship squeezed past not thirty feet away from our poop-rail, a tremendous maintop bellow—his report to the bridge, which seemed in the triumphant victory of its ringing tones above the wind to epitomise the whole affair in three illuminating words—" All Clear Aft ! "

III. THE JOSS-PIECE.

BY IAN SCOTT.

AMONG seafaring men, superstitious since the dawn of history, recognition of symbols of faith, of good luck, or 'joss,' has always played an important part. The Eye of Osiris has sought out a safe course through the waters of the world for over two thousand years. The 'long ships'' joss was in their carved and decorated bow and stern-posts; possibly the ancient coracle-man slapped on a lick of woad. In the early days of our first recorded sea fights, from Alfred off the Wight and Edward III. off Sluys, onwards, each fighting ship carried a Virgin and Child at the break of the poop to safeguard the ship's company. Every seaman entering the waist of the ship crossed himself reverently. Today that old custom still survives in the saluting of the quarter-deck.

During the centuries from Hawkins to Nelson, fighting seamen placed enormous faith in their ships' figureheads. They were garlanded in victory; frigates or privateers returning from successful cruises would have their figureheads hung with rich silks or brocades, sometimes they would be studded with bullion or gold pieces. Was it not at the Glorious First of June that the crew of the *Brunswick* sent a deputation to their badly wounded captain? In a stiff fight with the *Vengeur* the casualties were large, the ship had been on fire three times, and the splintered wreck was on the verge of foundering. Someone noticed that the hat had been blown off the figurehead (representing the Duke of Brunswick). The deputation respectfully asked the captain for his gold-laced hat. The carpenter nailed it in place, and the cheering men forced the *Vengeur* to strike her flag.

At the 'Battle of the Saints' Rodney's flagship was in close action with the French Admiral. A round-shot tore open a coop and a released bantam cock perched on the remains, crowing and flashing its wings at every broadside. With redoubled fury the men went on to gain the most important sea victory in history, save only for Trafalgar. The cock became a favourite fighting joss.

The Chinese make the cult of the joss a real faith. Apart from the individual joss idol and compass joss of each vessel, to which they burn sticks, prayer papers, and *sycee*, they have their own particular methods of countering bad joss. Every masthead carries an anti-devil device, cunning holes are cut to let bad joss escape, but designed to prevent re-entry. 'Tom Ratsey's Peepholes' have existed in Chinese sails for ages. One purpose at any rate is to fool the devils, who, of course, go slap through the sail when they try to blow it away. Crackers, flares, and gong-beating are used to drive off the evil spirits which, they believe, follow in their wake; a belief that results in the dangerous practice of cutting finely past the bows of another vessel to rid themselves of the tormentor to plant it on the other ship.

During the war, superstition, as always in war-time, was rife. Nearly every small ship in the Navy had a joss of sorts, and it was not only confined to the small ships. In the *New Zealand* the ship's company went into action completely confident of surviving because the Captain wore a Maori coat, and held in his hand a greenstone club. These had been presented by an old Maori chief, who prophesied that the ship would not be hit in action if this procedure was carried out. The *New Zealand* went through the Dogger Bank and Jutland without a scratch.

Submarine seamen are the most superstitious of them all. I was sitting in the *Pandora's* Mess at Harwich during the war, drinking a sherry with Perth, the Captain of an '*E*' boat. He was a heavily bearded Viking of a man and always untidily dressed. Out of his left sleeve I suddenly saw a pink, twitching nose appear, followed by white whiskers and a pair of darting red eyes. I was all the more startled because a large bull terrier alongside paid no attention whatever. The white rat advanced gingerly over the hairy hand to drink from the sherry glass. With a final twitch to its whiskers it turned and disappeared whence it came. It next came into sight from underneath Perth's beard, and stared at me unwinkingly. Badly shaken, I put my glass down and with trembling fingers lit a cigarette.

"William," said Perth, grabbing the rat and thrusting it into his inside pocket, "you've been swilling my sherry again. William is the joss of my boat," he went on to explain; "he lives in this coat." I heard later that the crew of that boat were uneasy, when they put to sea, till William was sighted peering out of some portion of his master's garments.

The joss we had in my submarine for two years was an 'Old Bill' doll I had captured from an 'Army' box at the Vaudeville Theatre. We took very good care he never missed a trip. He stood comfortably between the hydroplane wheels where everyone could see him, and his cheery countenance and unshakable calm gave us that extra confidence which carries one through the worst situations. In that boat we survived bombing, gunfire, depth-charging and ramming, and this during a period when casualties were very high. Twice we were ashore on the enemy coast; but 'Old Bill' pulled us safely through.

There will always be lucky and unlucky ships. Why, I do not pretend to know, but it is so.

Every British submarine launched with the number thirteen was unlucky and caused great loss of life. *A 13* had two fatal explosions before she finally sank. *B 13* and *C 13* were both sunk. *E 13* ran ashore trying to enter the Baltic, and her crew were shelled as they swam to the beach in territorial waters. *G 13* was hoodoo and lost officers and men overboard in bad weather, an unusual occurrence in submarines. *K 13* was, I suppose, the unluckiest of the lot. During her acceptance trials in the Gairloch she sank with the loss of forty-eight lives. The survivors escaped by a combination of bravery, hard work, and chance after being on the bottom for over forty hours. Raised again she was rechristened *K 22*, but that did not change her luck. One dark night she was leading four 'K' class submarines out of the Firth of Forth ahead of the Battle Cruiser Squadron. Her fuel pressure failed, and in dropping back suddenly she was hit by her next astern. The cruiser attached to the flotilla turned round to help, and in the dark cut a 'K' boat in half. She sank at once. In the confusion the battle cruisers coming out ran into the mêlée, sinking a second submarine. Many survivors swimming in the cold black waters were cut to pieces by propellers. The two remaining underwater craft limped back to harbour, one minus a bow and the other minus a stern.

These were the only British submarines built with this number, and they were the last.

There are some ships today in which no one is keen to serve. Their long run of misfortune has become a byword. It is surprising how strong a feeling can exist on this subject. It is one which has to be considered even in these modern times. Sailors are quick to appreciate a good joss or lucky ship, and equally quick to discover an unfortunate one.

I remember taking over a brand-new 'R' class submarine at the end of the war. The lady who launched her sent me a small bronze bulldog with a silver collar as a mascot for the boat. It may have been a mascot, but it was no joss-piece. As soon as I had it in my hand I realised this. It was not *simpatico.* The cox'n helped me unpack it; we looked at each other and slowly shook our heads. I saw it the other day where I had placed it nearly twenty years before, in the anteroom at Fort Blockhouse, the Submarine Base. It has never been to sea.

More recent were the unlucky

series of misfortune suffered by the *Devonshire*. The ship's company became convinced that their bad joss was due to the *silver* drums presented to the ship on commissioning. These have now been landed, and with them, one hopes, all their bad luck. The established joss-piece has an extraordinary grip on a ship considering the triviality of the objects that reach this exalted position. I have come across many queer ones, ranging from monkeys, pigeons, and tortoises to a bullet-shattered beer tankard and a Persian prayer-rug.

At the beginning of 1918 my boat, a mine-laying submarine, was detailed for the Adriatic. Three hundred mines were to be sent after us in a merchant ship. I boarded her at Plymouth to look at the cargo before we sailed. In the Mess I lit three cigarettes with one match. The First Officer turned on me savagely—

"Good Lord!" he cried, "we've got through the whole war without sighting a periscope. We lost our ship's cat this morning. Now you've torn it!" I could see they were on edge at losing their cat, and did my best to cheer them up. They sailed two days after us, escorted by a sloop and three trawlers. Not a single ship or survivor from this little convoy ever made port.

II.

Since passing lonely Alboran Island the wind had dropped. The stiff breeze and white-capped waves of the previous day had given place to a faint offshore wind which carried with it the strange, tangy smell peculiar to the North African coast. The rising sun dispelled the low-lying dawn mists, and once more the Mediterranean lay round us blue and shimmering. Gibraltar we had left only the day before, grey and gloomy in the driving rain; biting gusts of wind had swept off the Rock to add to our discomfort.

I responded gratefully to the altered conditions. Behind me were six weeks of arduous work running a submarine flotilla single-handed without a depot ship. Apart from having to attend many full-dress functions I was further handicapped by having in addition to my own work that of paying and provisioning the flotilla. Truly I might have quoted a famous Admiral and said: "I'm me own Staff!" All this was past now, and with the rejoined depot ship in company we were approaching Oran, where I looked forward to a pleasant 'stand easy.'

Blue sea and sky did their best to enhance the scene, but Oran from the sea is no beauty spot. Behind the breakwater the approach through a long, narrow, canal-like entrance is lined with sheds, godowns, and coal dumps. Dingy colliers were unloading in clouds of coal-dust, dingier barges loaded the enormous casks of ration wine for the French Army. The noisy clatter of busy winches and the din of innumerable manœuvring tugs rose in the still air.

At the end of the harbour rises the grim old castle of the corsair Bashas, now the Naval Base. With the *Lucia* we secured stern first to the Naval Yard, where in the past the piratical xebecs had lain. Ashore the French, as usual, proved good hosts. There were many *vins d'honneur* with the Navy and the Army. We lunched with the Governor in his wonderfully decorated Moorish palace, and made the usual round of calls. I remember the Consul's infant daughter was christened on board. We borrowed a padre, and the up-ended ship's bell was the font. She was well and truly launched with the name of Lucia. I thought it was lucky for the poor child we were not in company with the depot ship *Titania*.

Some of us went by car to make our number on the Foreign Legion at Sidi-bel-Abbes. It was an uninteresting run through flat, sandy country; mile after mile of sparse cultivation with isolated little white-walled farm buildings lying thirstily aglare in the warm sunshine. We arrived early in the afternoon in time to witness a football match between the Flotilla and the 1st Regiment of the Legion. We learnt that they had only thirteen players altogether, all German. These men, beautifully muscled, did half an hour's physical drill before the game began; they then proceeded to knock sixteen bells out of our team. I must say they played fine football. The tiny Colonel Commandant was delighted, and his magnificent divided beard curled with pleasure.

We went round the barracks, and were impressed by their cleanliness and the quality of the food supplied. Suspiciously I collected a previous week's menu, but found it equally good. The backbone of the Legion is undoubtedly their exceedingly fine N.C.O.'s. The only glimpse I had of the iron discipline was when a very small corporal marched a fatigue party into barracks. His men, dirt-spattered and swaying, looked 'out on their feet,' but he kept them standing to attention while he went away to report their return.

Moor, the captain of *Y 9*, and I were shown over the unique Museum of the Legion. It is more of a shrine than a museum, and reminds one of the Invalides on a smaller scale. It is hung with tattered flags and pennons. On the walls hang every conceivable form of weapon. The show-piece, in a glass case, is the mummified hand of a long-dead colonel of the regiment. Moor nudged me. "My hat, what a marvellous joss-piece," he said under his breath, and I saw his eyes sparkle.

Now I had had all kinds of trouble with John Moor in China. If he saw something he coveted he was likely to get it. It might be a Sikh policeman's puggri or a Bannerman's sword. Once we had to run extremely fast in Peking from an irate crowd. It was only when we reached safety that I discovered he had a small bronze God of Fertility under his coat. He was incorrigible. I took good care not to let him out of my sight while we remained in Sidi-bel-Abbes.

In the evening we listened to the magnificent band of the 1st Regiment, probably the finest military band in the world. I asked the Colonel about British Legionaries. He had only two, but they were such bad characters he regretted he could not allow them to visit us at Oran.

All the way back John's thoughts were on the mummified hand. I pointed out to him that it was a joss-piece for the Legion only, and would most certainly bring bad luck anywhere else.

"I wouldn't mind if you lifted the Crown jewels, but even to think of the old boy's hand is the limit," I told him.

"I haven't got a joss-piece in Y 9," he replied, "and we must get one. I left my Smiling Buddha in China." (It also had come out of a temple, but had been most efficient.)

"A joss-piece has to be chosen with as much care as a wife," I said. "When you get the right inspiration, go ahead; but your methods of collecting them are apt to spoil any joss they have."

I went ashore with John in Oran the next night. We walked to the brightest spot we could find, the Coq d'Or. This was a gaily lit restaurant with a cabaret show at one end and a shining bar, running the whole breadth of the room, at the other. We sat down at a little marble-topped table close to the dance floor and ordered beer. Almost at once we were called upon to repel boarders in the shape of shrill-voiced blondes and brunettes. Some small knowledge of Parisian argot enabled me to do this effectively if not exactly politely.

The pale, amber liquid which passes for beer in Oran did not satisfy us any more than did the indifferent cabaret, so we strolled in the direction of the bar in search of whiskey. As I looked over the top of my glass at John I saw his eyes fixed rigidly on some distant object. Following his gaze I had no difficulty in spotting the object that had attracted his attention, nor did it need the muttered "Gosh! there's my joss-piece" to confirm it.

At the end of the bar counter stood a life-size golden cock made of papier-maché or porcelain. I grabbed John's arm. "Easy, chaps," I said. "If you pinch that you'll start a rough-house. It's obviously the pride of the establishment." I sensed that persuasion was useless, but I did my best. John's eyes held the determined glitter that had always preceded swift-moving trouble in the old China days.

"Order the other half," he demanded. "I'm going to have a word with my navigator. He's right at the end of the bar there."

As his pilot was at the opposite end of the bar from the golden cock, I let him go. He was back in a few moments, calmly drinking at my expense the round he should have paid for.

Without warning there was a loud explosion at the far end of the bar. Instantly there was pandemonium; girls screamed, glasses were dropped, the band stopped, and the sound of scraping chairs was punctuated by excited Latin chattering. Blue smoke drifting along the bar brought to me the distinctive smell of gunpowder. I looked round for John. He had disappeared; I looked further. Yes! the golden cock had gone too. As I still gazed all the lights went out. The panic started again. The lights came on in a few minutes, and I found John alongside me peacefully sipping his drink.

"You old snake!" I exclaimed. "Directly I smelt gunpowder I recognised your dainty touch. Where have you stowed the beast, anyway?"

"Staff work, my boy! As you so cleverly guessed I had the odd cracker with me. The pilot touched it off when I was in position, and I merely slipped into the cloakroom with the bird. I turned it over to the pilot, who had joined me in the confusion. Then I found the switchboard handy, so I pulled the main switch. Easy!"

"Yes," I persisted, "but where is it? They're bound to notice its absence soon."

"Don't worry. It's half-way back to the ship by now," he replied. "It's the joss of a lifetime; look how smoothly the getaway went."

Like a burst of machine-gun fire an excited spate of chattering broke out from behind the counter, rising in a crescendo of shrillness. The loss had been discovered.

Manager, bar-tender, and waiters held close conference with much shrugging of shoulders and rolling of eyes. Then, as if on a starting gun, they scurried across the floor like new-born cockroaches from the egg-sac. A table to table search began on protesting and indignant customers. It (the Coq d'Or) was hardly an object that could be hidden on one's person, so naturally, standing at the bar as we were, we were above suspicion. John, in rotten French, suggested to the bar-tender that possibly the bird had flown away. This brought forth another infuriated outburst. When things had cooled down somewhat we took our departure.

On our return to the flotilla we went aboard *Y 9* and found our way to the wardroom. Staring down on the brightly lit compartment was the golden cock. To me it looked sinister and sphinx-like, but John was delighted.

"What do you think of our new joss-piece?" he asked his aeroplane pilot.

Now, I expected a man who was airman and submarine officer at one and the same time to be doubly superstitious, but apparently he was not.

"I don't worry about joss-pieces," he replied, "but if I did I wouldn't go much on that one. The pilot slipped on the gang-plank carrying it on board, and not having a free hand he finished on the saddle-tanks. Nothing broken, but he lost a good bit of skin."

John was not impressed. "Give it a chance to 'sling its hammock!'" he said. "It must get used to the boat."

As I climbed out of the wardroom I sang out to John over my shoulder, "If I were you, John, I'd ditch that ruddy bird!"

We returned to Gibraltar to carry out combined Fleet exercises with the Home and Mediterranean Fleets. During the week at Gibraltar we were busy preparing torpedoes and fuelling. Returning from a practice flight one morning *Y 9's* seaplane landed in the crowded harbour and carried away one of her floats. I thought at once of that golden bird perched so motionless and silent.

Before sailing I went over to John's boat to discuss our operation orders. As I walked along the upper deck round the hangar two men blocked my way. They were the cox'n and a signalman. They had their backs towards me and were discussing the contents of a signal pad the signalman was holding. I heard the latter saying, "Another ruddy 'can,' 'swain! We ain't 'ad no luck since the skipper brought that bleeding blonde 'en aboard."

"'Strue," answered the cox'n. "I wish he'd get rid of the basket!" Turning, he noticed my presence, and with a "Sorry, sir," stepped out of the way.

In the wardroom my glance flew at once to the golden cock. It looked even more cold and sinister than when I had last seen it. Once again as I left I tried to persuade John to get rid of it. I could not tell him what his own crew thought about it, but I told him it gave me the creeps.

"He's all right," maintained John pig-headedly. "You can't blame him for the plane smash. That was outside the boat."

"Well, at any rate I personally wouldn't touch the thing with a bearing-out spar," I returned.

"Damn it all!" he cried, "you've got a fighting cock tattooed on your own shoulder. What's the difference?"

I gave it up.

III.

The long line of submarines dived at dawn. The sun, rising over the sandy African desert, found only the periscope tops to reflect its shining glory. We held our depth easily enough in the long Atlantic swell as we lay in wait for the 'enemy' battle cruisers. A few glistening terns settled on the water close to the periscope, but apart from them the sea was empty. Idly sweeping the horizon in the expected direction of the enemy's advance I suddenly became aware of a strange white object. Surely it could not be a full-rigged ship? There was no wind. Even as I looked, the bellying sails seemed to straighten and take more solid shape. Hell! it was a battle cruiser rising over the horizon. I looked for and discovered the mastheads of the destroyer screen.

"Action stations!" I cried. "Enemy B.C. bearing Green 30. 12° on her port bow. Range, 18,000. Screened!" They were coming along fast, and I turned at once on to a firing course. I could see no aircraft, but that did not mean they were not there. "Sixty feet!" I ordered.

"Submarine close on our port beam, sir!" That report rather startled me. The nearest submarine should be five miles away. I did not want to call her up in case the destroyer screen heard me. To attack zigzagging battle cruisers through two destroyer screens was quite enough without having to worry about the danger of an under-water collision that was bound to have fatal results.

I came back to periscope depth to try and catch the enemy's 'zig,' and luckily got it, so knew when to expect the next turn and the probable extent of their next alteration of course. Their speed must have been about nineteen knots, although the destroyers seemed to be going much faster. As the distant screen was well spread out, I decided to remain at periscope depth. I must admit I was influenced by the presence of this other submarine. If we were going to be bumped we should have more chance near the surface. I successfully negotiated the distant screen and fired round the wing destroyer of the close screen. As I surfaced to claim the shots I saw the leading battle cruiser swerve off to starboard, screaming on her siren as she did so. What on earth was the matter? She could not be altering to avoid my torpedoes, and she was certainly not due for the next 'zig.' Then, close under her quarter, I saw a submarine breaking surface. The second battle cruiser skinned past. What an escape! As she rose in the creaming, tumbled wakes of the big ships I saw it was *Y 9.* How the devil had she got there? She must have passed within half a cable of me during the attack. Under the keen eyes of my signalman I lit a cigarette with a fairly steady hand.

"Pilot," I bawled down the conning-tower, "come up here." When he appeared I told him what had happened. "Check through all our courses and speeds and all the compass repeaters. Somebody's error has put two submarines in great danger."

Our track chart proved conclusively that we had made no mistake.

"Gosh!" I murmured to myself. "I was right about that blasted bird. It nearly did us in too!"

I closed *Y 9* on the surface, making to him, "Are you all right?"

"Sorry," came the answer. "Sperry went off and magnetic compass let us down. Went deep, but couldn't stay down. Near thing."

The scattered submarines rejoined the depot ship for the long run home to England. I was glad we were at one end of the line and *Y 9* at the other. I did not trust that bird!

The slim finger of the Eddystone rose above the horizon against the pale dawn. Astern of me *Y 9* raised a hoist of flags to her masthead. She was asking to proceed in execution of previous orders. *Y 9* belonged to the Portsmouth Flotilla and we were based on Plymouth.

As we stood in for the Sound she passed astern on her way up Channel, her low bow dipping into the scend of a long swell. Her ugly hull grew more distant, and for some reason I thought of an old bull elephant driven from the herd. I did not realise I should never see her again.

IV.

The submarine lying out in West Bay was rolling easily in the long swell coming up Channel from the Atlantic. In the vast stretch of Lyme Bay she appeared to have the sea all to herself. To the eastward Portland Bill raised its dark crest above the grey seas. To the northward the Chesil Beach ran along to join the steep Downs till the coast faded in a smoky blue to the west.

H.M. Submarine *Y 9* had sailed from Portland Harbour early that morning to carry out routine trials with her aircraft. These consisted of surfacing from periscope depth and launching the aircraft on a reconnaissance flight. *Y 9's* hangar door was only two feet above the water-line at full buoyancy, so that in any lop or swell the tanks had to be fully blown to give a safe margin before opening it. As the submarine surfaced, the aeroplane's crew (the pilot and observer) and the mechanics climbed into the hangar. Once on the surface the door would be opened, the machine pushed clear, and her wings spread. Finally, she would be catapulted into the air.

Already they had launched the tiny machine into the low-roofed sky. On her return she had been hoisted in, and was once more stowed with folded wings in the hangar. Great speed and efficiency had been achieved by constant practice, seconds had been clipped here and there, but John Moor, like every other submarine captain, was not satisfied that they could not do better.

In spite of the overcast sky the visibility was good. *Y 9* was well to the northward of the busy traffic lines of the Channel shipping. Far to the eastward the depot ship caught the diving signal out of the ether. Only the wheeling sea-gulls watched her dive. Far beneath them they could see this strange marine monster submerging. As the boat slid under, the air escaping through the open vents blew little plumes of water aloft, for all the world like the 'smoke' of a spouting whale.

Down below one can well picture the familiar scene; all hands at their stations tensed to the utmost efficiency and awaiting eagerly the order, "Surface." The hum of the rapidly revolving motors would be deadened by the whirring of the hydroplane wheels as the planes were put over to "Rise." This in its turn would fade before the whistling scream of high-pressure air as the tanks were blown. Keen eyes would be watching the gauges.

The great hull slowly emerged. The sea foamed round the hangar and conning-tower as the submarine broke surface. She paused for a moment, like a hunting seal, then slowly sank from sight.

Below the horizon the depot ship caught a broken wisp of the surfacing signal. That was to be the last they would ever hear from *Y 9*. Large bubbles of air forced their way up through the dark waters. Gouts of oil followed them to spread their rainbow colours over the empty sea; empty save for a sailor's cap which drifted forlornly to leeward, the sole relic of this swift disaster. In the depths, fathoms below, *Y 9* settled herself more comfortably in the mud of the ocean bed.

Forward in the wardroom, in the dim light of the dying batteries, the golden cock must have looked down impassively.

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